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ABSTRACT

The four issues of the journal SKOLE published in 1998 contain articles, personal narratives, and interviews about educational philosophy, small alternative schools, freedom and democratic practices in education, and the overuse of Ritalin in schools. Feature articles discuss holistic education, how classroom technology promotes passivity and perverts education, the true meaning of "discipline," a Japanese school modeled after Summerhill School, myths concerning attention deficit disorders and Ritalin, student meditation as a stimulus to creative writing, what teachers can do to ameliorate students' negative self-concept, "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" as a model for understanding human behavior, managing student behavior with drugs, revisioning professionalism in teaching, parent information on learning styles, supporting the parent-child relationship, the deficiencies of public schooling, a call to recover classical ideas of higher education, advice on essay writing for prospective college students, democracy in a new Florida charter school, cooperative community lifelong learning centers, and innovative practices in small community schools. Issues also include chapters from the 1949 book "Freedom in Education," by Elizabeth Ferm of the Stelton Modern School; letters from readers; book reviews; student writings; poetry; and descriptions of alternative education conferences. (SV)

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the Journal of Alternative Education

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

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THE LINK
A HOMESCHOOL
newspaper

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Coming June '98

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

I just received an e-mail from Albert Lamb telling me that Summerhill's Ena Neill had died. He sent a copy of his eulogy, which evokes her to the life! With her death, it feels as though an era is coming to a close, one in which the discovery for Americans in the 60s of the existence of a school as revolutionary as the Neills' Summerhill was a real beacon of hope for the future of our kids!

This has been an amazing three months! I'm glad to say that the bad things that have occurred have been more than balanced off by the good ones, but still, these millennial times are often frightening, and no new beacons of hope seem to be rising to carry us through them.

Good things first: We have a new web page for The Free School, crafted by Eddie Watson, who did John Potter's New School of Northern Virginia. It's GORGEOUS, and will be even better as time goes on and we add more links, so keep an eye out!:

http://www.lowmedia.com/AltEdFreeSchool

Also, both *ΣΚΟΛΕ* and the *Journal of Family Life* have received an outpouring of support from readers, for which we thank you profoundly! Even the *JFL*, which sends out 5,000 copies per issue, more than half of them to distributorships, is coming closer and closer to being self-supporting, which is a miracle for such a new publication! And us *ΣΚΟΛΕ* folks (mostly me on the financial and subscription side) are no longer agonizing over declines in either readership or revenues! It's never been a big cushion that we keep, but at least it's back to where it was before we started the *Journal of Family Life* and expanded our readership to include both journals!

Barb Lundgren has given us her support as a possible ad manager, and she and we have begun receiving responses from y'all! Her yearly homeschooling gatherings in Texas have been a brilliant success, and that's good news! Do fill out the questionnaire she sent us with the last issue!

As for bad things, recently I was made forcibly aware that not everyone likes my personal editorial style! I'm not sure why that shocked me so deeply—perhaps because it came so unexpectedly from an educator I admire greatly. Ever since, I've been trying to rationalize how such a thing could happen among people who are equally dedicated to radical educational change, but with widely differing personal styles.

Because, like prophets and reformers throughout history, we are statistically such a tiny group in the context of the mass of humanity, we feel ignored a lot of the time, as Ron Miller says in his interview—at least by the people with the power to make real changes. So the feelings and judgments we hold toward one another loom disproportionately large, and we often overreact to negative judgments and criticisms that come from people we believed to be colleagues and supporters. So, when something we or they have said or written is received as offensive or hurtful by them or us, feeling hurt and angered, we or they strike back in kind!

That used to happen a lot within activist groups during the thirties, and again during the sixties and seventies—and their "enemies" rejoiced to see the dissensions among them and were able to use that dissension to discredit them in the media through slander and innuendo!

We each have our own style. In the face of such stylistic differences, it's not always easy to remember the commonality of life forms—what Thich Nhat Hanh calls "interbeing." Pogo said, "We has met the enemy and he is US!" It's too easy to see only our own righteousness.

But we need at least to work on that process of completion. Perhaps we fear to lose our fire, our passion, if we manage to forgive—ourselves, first of all, our "opponents" next! Well, actually, that is far more likely to happen if we DON'T do that processing! It never stops being painful, but when you manage it, the sense of release of trapped energy, passion for the job, is tremendous! I am always hoping that *ΣΚΟΛΕ* will be a part of that healing process!

I call this issue *Freedom in Education*, after the title of Elizabeth Byrne Ferm's book (being serialized in each issue) about Froebel and the Modern School's spirit of freedom for children, of which she is an eloquent spokesperson.

The first section of this issue presents an interview with Ron Miller, an advocate of educational holism, and a critic of what he calls John Taylor Gatto's "libertarianism," by which term he means John's emphasis on the primacy of the individual, to the neglect of the equal significance of the influence of society. Following the interview is an article by John intended to persuade us to end the centuries-long battle over science and religion we're still waging in our social and political institutions—to look more deeply, to choose on the right basis what we want for our children. Ron might say that the notion that families can choose to turn their backs on the secular, scientific model society has adopted and opt for one based on more unchanging, eternal values is perhaps naive, since these values are not dependent on the individual in society but on social systems that operate to oppress individual lives but are not modifiable by the individual.

SPECIAL READERS' SECTION

From Albert Lamb:

Dear Mary,

...I am sending you something I have meant to share with you since I got back from Prague with Jerry [Mintz] almost a month ago. This is a report I gave to the Summerhill List on Ena Neill's funeral.

Dear List,

I wanted to send you all the text of my speech about Ena at her funeral last week but I didn't have much time before flying off to Prague with Jerry Mintz for five days to give a seminar for the Czech ministry of education about democratic education. Now that I am back I am going to post my eulogy for anyone who might be interested. The rest of you can skip it.

The day of the funeral turned out to be a beautiful one, the rain held off until the late afternoon. Well over a hundred people gathered, mostly old-Summerhillians, with representatives from every generation of the last fifty years, but also many Leiston friends, to give Ena a send off in the big barn of the Leiston Abbey. Then, after the trip to the cemetery, we had something to eat in an adjacent building. The whole set up around the abbey is used as a sort of conference centre. The service was entirely non-religious if you don't count the singing of one of Ena's favourite psalms at the start, The Lord is My Shepherd.

The local Suffolk funeral director ran the show in a very down-home manner. Zoe spoke a bit about death, mostly with quotes including a good one from Bertrand Russell. Ena's granddaughter Amy, who was married in the same barn a year ago, read a poem. I gave the tribute. A few hymns were sung, including Jerusalem and

Morning Has Broken and the service ended with a CD of Louis Armstrong singing What a Wonderful World.

The most touching moment of the whole event for me came later when Ena's casket was lowered into the ground in the churchyard where Neill and Peter Wood are buried. Most of the people at the Abbey had driven over to pay last respects and as everyone stood around watching the casket being lowered a cat wandered amongst us and walked up and peered down into the hole where Ena's body had just been deposited. Ena loved cats and had a cat like spirit and it was spooky and wonderful to see her getting a feline send off.

Here is what I said at the service:

We are gathered here together to honor and to remember Ena Neill. For all of us from Summerhill School she is part of the glue that holds us together. Anyone who has attended Summerhill as staff or pupil during the last fifty years will have undoubtedly forgotten many people. But no one is likely to have forgotten Ena. She was an exceptional, extraordinary human being who brought great physical power and strength and enormous moral force to her complete focus on Summerhill and its children. Our Ena was one in a million.

Tenacity was one of Ena's strongest characteristics, so much so that I can now hardly believe she has finally let go her tenacious hold on life. More than that, it is hard to believe she has let go her hold on us. For we are her children and she was our mother hen. Surely even people her own age have felt her motherly quality and for us relative youngsters, whether she was seen as a good mother or a bad mother, she was the mother we could not avoid. I should confess right at the start that I personally didn't have the easiest relationship with Ena, at least not recently. For several years I have stayed with her over in the Cottage when I have come to stay at the school. She very kindly let me have my own bedroom. I was a frequent visitor and I always looked forward to my time with her but there were some occasions when I hadn't even poked my head around her kitchen door before she started yelling at me about something or other.

It sometimes seemed to me that the price of real intimacy with Ena was a certain amount of this emotional wear and tear. I only know of one man who always seemed to stay on her good side and he had to do a lot of fancy footwork to manage the trick. However she did have a few old friends to whom she was uniformly kind. And my relationship with her was actually a very loving one.

If Ena was quick to express annoyance her deep heart was always strong and steady. In this she was very much a Summerhillian. Relationships here are played out against a background of complete acceptance. At the end of the day Ena accepted us all and really wished the best for us. She just didn't pretend to be liking us when she wasn't in the mood.

Having breakfast with Ena was like negotiating a minefield. If I was five minutes late or five minutes early I could get in trouble. She kept an eagle eye on how much water went into the teapot. The bread had to be cut just so. There were always cats all over the table eating bits of rabbit and leaving their tails in the butter dish. On one terrifying occasion Ena surprised me with outraged indignation and her icy glare when she caught me sniffing some old milk in her fridge to see if it had gone off.

Even as a boy I thought Ena's eyes were extraordinarily expressive. When you came to get your food from the hatch you never knew if they were going to pierce or twinkle. Sometimes they even seemed half-lidded, like an owls. Then you didn't know what she was thinking. One time as a kid I snuck out in the middle of the night in complete secrecy but when I came to the breakfast hatch in the morning she shot a glance at me which told me that she knew all about it. How did she always know all those things?

When I was first a pupil at Summerhill, in 1961, I thought Ena was one of the hardest working women I had ever seen. Neill was the Headmaster but Ena ran the school and she did it mostly by working hard herself. Not that she seemed flustered or rushed. She was just a very capable and willing worker who made sure that the whole place stayed shipshape. It was an example of sacrifice and control that meant a lot to me years later when I had my own small children.

Her beloved son Peter would explain to kids what a difficult time Ena had had before she came to Summerhill. He would tell the story about how one time Ena came back to her rooms in London and found that her house was on fire. Rather than lose her wages which were hidden away up in her bedroom she climbed up through a smoke filled window to retrieve them.

Ena's first husband, Bill Wood, had grown up near her in Kent. They were childhood sweethearts. While Bill studied at art school to be an illustrator Ena studied nursing. Bill became quite successful as an illustrator and he married Ena in 1933. The next year they had their son Peter. When Peter was three Bill and Ena, who had read *That Dreadful School*, decided to put him on the waiting list at Summerhill and send him there the next year. Within a few more months Bill Wood had left Ena for his sister's best friend. Ena was left to fend for herself and for Peter. Bill Wood never took any further interest in Peter.

Ena went to work in a photographic reproduction studio in London and the next year she sent Peter to Summerhill. When the war started her reproduction studio was bombed out and her company kept moving around until the owner gave up on it. Ena was offered a job taking a friend's children to America to live out the war and she wrote Neill to tell him that she was taking Peter out of the school. He wrote back that the school was moving to Wales and he said, "We need a cook. Can you cook?" The rest, as they say, is history.

Cooking, as it happens, and everything to do with food, was one of the great loves in Ena's life. Other great loves were her family, her school, and her animals. Ena not only had good taste in food but in many other things as well. She drew well and her paintings had a strong sense of colour. She loved fine furniture and all her rooms were well decorated. She knew how to make a garden attractive and she loved flowers. If she had ever had the time for it she could have been a very good writer as she was the master of the pithy phrase.

Ena also showed her nurturing spirit with her pets. In later years Ena's cats had the run of the house. Previously she had had dogs. But she had a sure touch with all animals. One time Ena and Peter raised a jackdaw from a very young bird until it was a tame part of the household. Ena would come over in the morning to make breakfast for the school with Jackie perched on her shoulder.

In recent years I always landed at Summerhill with bags laden down with one thing or another. Ena thought the luggage that I brought with me was more than was necessary for the length of my stay. In fact she seemed to think there was something self-agrandising about carrying that much stuff around with me. When I arrived at the Cottage even if she didn't say anything she would stare in horror as I crossed her kitchen weighed down by all my luggage.

With Ena gone we have all lost a link to our past. Right to the end Ena had vivid memories of hundreds of her former pupils and staff. She kept her faith with us by never forgetting us. Without her will and her energy Summerhill would not be here today. She literally kept it alive. I, for one, will remember the tremendous moral force she had in her prime and her fine, strong voice shouting: "For crying out loud," at a room full of kids. And I will miss the Ena of her old age. There will be no one in my life now to care how heavy the bags are that I always seem to end up carrying around with me.

From Bree Edwards:

Dearest Mary,

What a wonderful issue Fall 1997 was, with Nathaniel Needle's "Lifelong Learning: A Holistic View," an especially poignant article to a Goddard off-campus/distance student like myself. Thank you!

But AHHH.... The Modern School section captured my heart; Chris' review of Paul Avrich's book, the interview with Jon Scott and the beautiful biography of Elizabeth Ferm.

It is in light of the Modern School issue that I must share with ya'll my story of trying to get my hands on a copy of Avrich's book. Two years ago my friend and advisor Dan at Goddard mentioned the Modern School movement, and I was immediately interested. This was at this time that the Modern School was having a reunion at Goddard. Being a "good student" I dashed deep into the woods to the Goddard Library, The Elliot Pratt Center. I checked the card catalog, and it was listed. Writing the number I went to check the stacks, but it was not to be found tucked back to front with all the other books. Deflated I went to the circulation desk, already knowing the way it can be in small libraries without "high tech" T bar-codedness (or perhaps it is just Goddard) Someone had snagged it, banished it from circulation! POOF.

I continued this style of searching for two years. I called Princeton University Press; however, because the book had been out of print since 1980, they had no copies available. They did however offer to do a search of bookstores across the country, for the mere cost of close to $200.00. I did pass up that "chance of a lifetime." I asked the one person I knew who had a copy if I could borrow it. As they stammered "I usually do not loan out my personal books", I knew this book was worth gold; which of course made me even more crazed to find it. The next step was to try Inter Library Loan (ILL). I was at this stage when Chris and I were talking in the Free School kitchen and the book came up.

Yeah, he knew the book and had a copy because he was writing a review for *ΣΚΟΛΕ*.

ALAS, I was in the same city with a copy, but this copy was Mary's or Jon Scott's; it turned out to be Jon Scott's mother Jo Ann Wheeler's copy. Someone had borrowed Jon's copy and hung onto it. By the time I finally opened this book it had come through all these hands and eyes, making those that read it feel like we are following the most noble of traditions; that the noise of everyday is the sound of freedom, not simply screaming kids. HURRAY!

I am sure Chris' review of *The Modern School Movement* will spark someone's curiosity in the book, the way the mention of the institution started my search. When this happens I have a PLEA:

Write to Princeton University Press %Re-print editor, 41 William St., Princeton, NJ 08540, or call 609-258-4900, asking for a second printing of Paul Avrich's *The Modern School Movement* ISBN# 0-691-04669-7.

Joseph Ishill's biography (pp. 231-37—but you can't read it if you don't have the book), the story of him toiling away on his movable type press creating the Oriole Press so inspired me that I have set about trying to locate a movable type press for myself. Perhaps if Ishill were still alive, he would undertake the project of running a second print of, as Chris put it, "a brillant, painstakingly researched work that is an essential addition to the body of literature on alternative education." But since Oriole Press is no longer running it is up to us *ΣΚΟΛΕ* readers, all of us, to help this book once again see the light of day and be enjoyed by its baited audience.

Love, Bree Edwards

Bree is one of the four Goddard graduates doing internships at The Free School this year. It has been inspiring to have such enthusiastic, talented people of their generation working with us! Thanks, Bree.

From Jerry Mintz:

AERO Radio show goes PRIME TIME!

We just got good news: My radio show, "The Education Revolution," on the Talk America Network is going to Prime Time! Starting September 7th, we will be on every Sunday at 9 PM Eastern time. The show will go to over sixty stations and on the internet, at www.talkamerica.com.

I don't have the list of stations, yet, but others can be added in your community if they want to carry the show. E mail me to find out if you have a station carrying the show near you.

Our sponsors include the Clonlara Home Based Education Program, Ron Miller's Great Ideas in Education Catalog, Arthur Morgan School, The Meeting School, Summerhill School, Horizons School, Stone Soup School, Stone Mountain School. We have room for a few more sponsors.

To call into the show, dial 800 298-8255.

from Jerry Mintz, jmintz@acl.nyit.edu;
Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO);
http://www.speakeasy.org/~aero

Three from Nat Needle:

Dear Mary,

Greetings from Kyoto! It's quite hot and humid here—the ring of mountains surrounding the bowl of the city traps the air, so they say, making it colder in winter and hotter in summer. We did get out of Kyoto for nearly the whole month of August, however. During the first third of the month, Mihoko, Asa, and I got together with Kazu's family (Kazuhiro Kojima, whose school, Global Human Bridge, has been in existence for at least ten years! One of these days I'll talk Kazu or Kei [who interned with us last year and now teaches at GHB to write me an article about the school!) and created a little "live-out" of our own in Tottori near the Japan Sea, at an old lodge owned by some local councilman who hadn't used the place in years. We did a lot of cleaning!

About twenty people of all ages came to the camp, mostly folks interested in or doing home schooling, or otherwise exploring their own learning paths. I got to spend a lot of time chatting with Kei Imai—that was great....

Love, Nat

Dear Mary,

Hello again—boy it's still hot here. I forgot.... to say that the Summer issue is terrific, and there was so much magnetic stuff in it that I actually sat on the front steps poring through it for a bit before it hit me that I'd better do something about [my] job application right away. I'm really glad to have this new stuff in English about Kinokuni, since we'll be checking out their place during this term's "educational alternatives" seminar, which starts next week.

And related to that, here's something short that I think might be useful either in *ΣΚΟΛΕ* or *JFL*, especially for parents and students who are just getting into this whole question of "you mean we have a CHOICE?". It's not comprehensive or deep, but I've been finding it handy, and isn't that worth something in the age of convenience? Would you please let me know if you want to print this? If there isn't, I might want to see if I can just put it in the NCACS newsletter, or AERO, or something like that:

Three Questions for Educational Alternative-Seekers

by Nat Needle

This past year, after years of being involved in various alternative education programs in the US, working mostly with young people, I've had the chance to teach a seminar called "educational alternatives" to adults in Kyoto, Japan! The members of the seminar have been a mix of Japanese folks who want to study in English, and native English speakers living in the area. In the seminar, we study actual alternatives that have been created, and are still in operation, both in Japan and abroad. We've looked at public schools, private schools, homeschooling, computer learning, and utter "deschooling".

As we learned about place after place, or experience after experience, I realized that by asking a few simple questions, I could more easily see what different paths had in common, and also open up into what was truly important to the people involved in each one. Just because the questions are simple doesn't mean the answers are a simple "yes" or "no."

Asking the questions, in fact, sometimes takes me into muddy waters. But even while wallowing in the mud, I have the feeling that I'm in the right place to be mucking about if I want to understand that particular alternative path. It occurs to me that these questions may help parents, or potential students or staff, to sort out the increasing wealth of possibilities available. I'm not a big fan of too much categorizing and analysis when it comes to something as complex and unique as someone's learning path.

Even so, I notice that if I can see some general things two alternatives have in common, it helps me pay closer attention to the meaningful small differences. For example, you might have two democratic schools: one where kids are involved in deciding the school budget, and one where they aren't. Or you might have two schools with no curriculum: one with a complex set of customs and rules, and one which is pretty anarchic.

These questions won't help you get into such deep details. But they may help open you to combinations of possibilities you hadn't been considering, and get you oriented to which combinations you do or don't want to consider. So, in studying any alternative, it may help to ask these three questions at the beginning:

Is there an actual institution called a school, at least a special place where young people go especially to learn and grow which is separate from home?

Is there a curriculum? In other words, are there organized skills or knowledge that everyone is expected to learn? How much curriculum is there? What kind of curriculum is it?

Is there a democracy? In other words, are all young people as well as all adults included meaningfully in the process of making decisions? How much democracy is there?

By mixing and matching the answers to these three basic questions, you may find that you can describe various alternatives by using categories like these:

1. A school, with a curriculum, and little or no democracy. This sounds like a usual school, but it might be a school with a humanistic or "holistic" curriculum, like a Steiner school, where there is greater-than-usual respect for children even though they may not formally participate in decisions.

2. A school, with a curriculum, and democracy. In this case, the students participate in creating the curriculum. Or else, the curriculum cannot be controlled by teachers or students (for example, a public school with state requirements), but most other decisions are made as a group.

3. A school, with no curriculum, and democracy. This might be something like Sudbury Valley School, where each person learns what he or she wants, and everyone can participate in school decisions.

4. No school, no curriculum, and democracy. This might be a homeschooling or "unschooling" situation where, within the family or community, decision-making includes children as well as adults, and children learn whatever they want.

5. No school, a curriculum, and democracy. There might be a family, community, or other non-school group where everyone is generally expected to learn something, for example: how to fish, or do circus routines, or play music, or bake bread, because everyone depends on each other for some economic or creative activity. Still, everyone participates in group decisions. Even if an alternative is not clearly one category or another, thinking about these questions may help you to understand the alternative better. If it does not help you, then please make your own categories or questions, or don't use any categories at all!

... and, after receiving Bree's praise, Nat sent this:

Dear Mary,

Thank you for the cheer! I've been rehearsing my telegraphic musical version of "The Little Engine That Could" with Japanese elementary school students. The girl who wanted to play the spunky little engine is a dwarf (I don't know the medical name for it) with some bodily disproportion that makes her walk a bit awkward. I was bummed yesterday to find out that her imminent transfer to another school where she could receive daily physical therapy would make it impossible for her to continue with the play. She is such a beam of light, and she is enjoying the rehearsals so much! Her teacher and I are trying to figure out a way to condense the rehearsal schedule so she can do it before she leaves. So your happy message broke my "hmmm....let's see...we could...." whirring machinery.

After today, I will not be checking email here until Jan.6th. By then, I hope to have my own computer, and even maybe my own email address by the middle of January. Stay tuned.

P.S. My son Asa keeps me well supplied with laughs, but they're pretty simple, mostly stuff like saying "good night" in the morning when he's not ready to get out of bed. He has a pretty funny sumo wrestler routine, too. Mihoko is doing great, involved with a number of mothers' groups in the neighborhood which do a lot of creative things with their kids and each other. Be well and love to all——Nat

From Amy Cooke:

Dear Free School Folks:

Hello! Just wanted to give you all an update from over here. We are in the midst of preparing for a visit from Joseph Chilton Pearce. He's coming Dec. 5 & 6 to do a presentation and workshop. We're really excited to get him here. It feels like a link to the world *out there* and I hope will do some consciousness raising *here*! The school is pretty much on hold. Last year taught us so much. I am assimilating all that and working to put in some sort of infrastructure for people to step into, *especially* in the realm of conflict resolution. My own lessons have been deep, and while painful, I feel I have a much better and clearer place from which to come in the space of the school. Grist for the mill!

So, this is an "in-breath" time. Settling, clarifying, talking, listening, looking within, looking out...

How was the Live-out? Thought of you all...

Love, Amy

From Willa Kline:

I'm getting my doctorate from Ball State University (Muncie, IN). I work in Fort Wayne, IN. The federally-funded program is a TRIO program (Educational Talent Search). We have seven people on staff and serve eight hundred students in middle school and high school each year. We tutor, visit colleges, help with financial aid forms, look for scholarships, prepare for the SAT, etc.

We also have an adult program (Educational Opportunity Center) that does many of the same things with adults. There are 7 people on staff in that program and they serve 2,000. We focus on first-generation, low-income students. The idea is to raise the educational level of the people, which in turn will raise the economic level.

And from Pat Montgomery:

Jerry Mintz and Mary Leue,

I wish to introduce you to Yehudah Fine. His family has been enrolled in Clonlara School Home Based Education Program for several years; Benny, his eldest graduated this year. Yehudah is a Rabbi and directs the Jewish Family Institute.

He recently had his book, "Times Square Rabbi" published by Hazelden Foundation. I am interested in having you both become acquainted with this man and his work. I asked him to send you copies of his book. Perhaps you could have it reviewed for your readerships (is that a word?).

Yehudah started an alternative school for migrant workers in the Sacramento, CA, area before moving to New York City where he worked with families and kids in crisis. His web address is www.timessquarerabbi.com

His e-mail address is yfine@zelacom. I told him that I wanted to introduce you both to him. (I do not have Mary's e-mail address; Jerry, could you forward this to her?)

Many thanks.
Pat Montgomery

I am leaving for a day or two; will return Monday. We are almost settled into the office portion of our new building. (I pinch myself every now and again.)

Pat Montgomery

And Pat was as good as her word. She sent us Rabbi Yehudah's book, Times Square Rabbi, *and Chris, who was deeply moved by it and by Yehudah's work, wrote a review which we published in the Summer issue. I urge you to write him if you're on line. I STILL haven't had time to read it, but I will! Thanks, Pat!*

Last minute commercial from Jon Bliss of East Hill School:

Dear Mary et el--

Belated apologies for not answering your appeal-subscription reminder sooner. Yes! I want to continue to receive all your publications! Here's why:

1. Alternative voices matter. Your championing of sane, humane, careful education is unique, and we need it. Therefore, you must keep on.
2. Education is one of the Mysteries. No one knows exactly how or why people learn. Any collection of writings which acknowledges this deserves support. Any approach which recognizes breadth of experience --and the redemptive power of reality--deserves to be heard.
3. You speak out of community. That is, you are held to account by specific individuals and your relationship to them. Where in America, amidst this babble of New Age talk masquerading as life philosophy, are the real communities, communities in which people fight and forgive, cook and clean up, build and barrow?

Your Albany Free School community and its influence should be celebrated wherever people care about the future of the Planet. Thank you, and keep up the good work.

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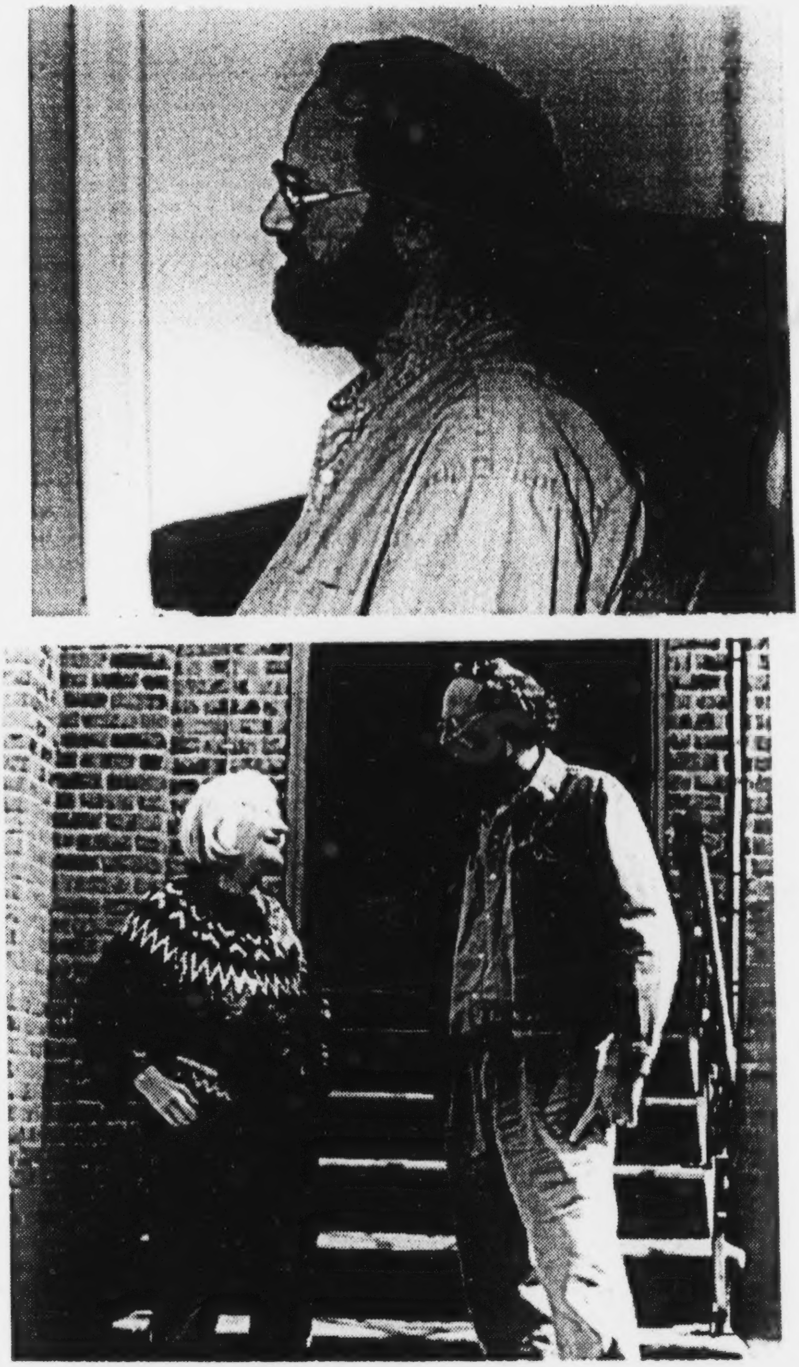

Two views of Ron Miller: a serious moment during the interview; enjoying a joke with Mary outside Mary's row house.

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TALKING ABOUT EDUCATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH RON MILLER

by Chris Mercogliano, Ellen Becker and Mary Leue

Chris: How about if we begin at the beginning. What was your own schooling like as a child? What kind of schools did you go to and what are your memories? What was your experience? I'm curious.

Ron: I went to public school in a suburb of Chicago that prided itself on good schools. They were very well funded and had a lot of good people in them. I had a fine experience there, I really did not have any reason to think negatively of it. I wasn't a rebellious student at all; even though I was growing up in the sixties and early seventies and all this cultural chaos was going on, we were pretty insulated from it there. So, it was a very stable and, I don't know whether I would call it nourishing, but it didn't feel oppressive at all to me. My intellectual rebellion against traditional schooling came quite a bit later, after I had learned a lot more about the world. I became less insulated than I had been.

Mary: What period would that be?

R: While I was in college, I had no career path in mind, so I was really free to explore history and psychology and philosophy and just went all over the map. I started to learn that the world was much more complicated, that there's much more conflict, there are more options for how to live than I ever realized growing up in a comfortable little suburb.

M: Where did you go to college?

R: I started at Rice University in Houston, but I stayed there only one year. I felt out of place, so I transferred to Michigan State. I think the first exposure I had to ways of thinking that really challenged me was humanistic psychology, came across Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. It just appealed to me. I said, "This makes a lot of sense!" But then I started questioning, "If this makes so much sense, why doesn't our society respond to it more? Why is this a marginal movement? In psychology, we have behaviorism, in politics, we have all kinds of junk going on, why don't we have a more humanistic society?" It was that question that really compelled me from then on.

M: This is what time frame?

R: Around 1976-77.
M: So, you and Chris are about the same age.
R: Well, I am forty-one.
C: I am forty-three.
R: I was twelve in 1968 and that was the big year that American culture seemed to explode with the assassinations and the riots and all that. It is curious that it had so little effect on me. I read it in the papers or saw it on TV and I thought, "Oh, isn't that terrible!"—and then went on and did my thing. It did not radicalize me at all.
M: You were too young. Twelve is too young to be radicalized.
R: I guess I just missed it. I think they stopped the draft the year I was eligible, so there really was nothing to radicalize me back then. It was really more of an intellectual discovery process where I came across ideas that excited me and they led to questions.
M: Did you ever have a course in political philosophies? I had a summer school course at Harvard where we studied syndicalism and anarchism and socialism, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Marx and Engels and so on. I found it absolutely fascinating.
R: I didn't have anything quite that broad.There was one semester I remember we were covering Karl Marx and Marxism in all my courses —history, philosophy, economics—and just coincidently, I was inundated with Marxism. I remember I was intellectually interested, but I was not converted at all. I was still pretty conservative.
M: No, it was long past the time for conversion. That time would have been the thirties, the Depression. That's the only reason to convert to Marxism—when you're really hurting and you've suddenly discovered that you are not the odd person out, that the society is doing it.
R: Well, that's not just the function of where you are in history, but where you are in the class structure. If I had come from an oppressed background, it might have appealed to me, but I have to be right up front and admit that I was drawn to humanistic psychology because it's an upper middle class movement. You've got all your creature comforts and now you can worry about meaning and happiness and those kinds of things and that's what attracted me. But it did lead to very serious questioning. Why can't everybody have this? That's when I started realizing, "Whoa, there are some problems here. Everyone can't have this and that's really tragic."
M: Have you ever read Kropotkin? His autobiography?

R: Not a great deal. I know of him and basically what he was about.

M: I'm not so interested in the political stuff; I'm interested in his description of his childhood—how he got to be the way he was. I always want to know how come people develop the interests and become the people they are as they get older. His father used to move the whole entourage, hundreds of people, the servants and old people and babies—the family rode in a coach—every summer. They went at least a hundred miles out into the country to their country estate. Sometimes the old people would die on the way. The minute they got to the summer place, the kids would throw off their shoes and make a bee-line for the peasant village where their nurse lived. She had gone back to the village and had married and had kids. They would just hang out with the kids in the village. That's where he got his particular flavor of anarchism that doesn't just apply to adults. That appeals to me a lot.

R. Tolstoy also had that same influence.

M. Absolutely! So, did you get those kinds of influences in college?

R. No. It was all intellectual, just reading things in books that spoke to me.

C: At what point did you get directly focused on education, would you say?

R: I was first interested in psychology. I got my Master's degree in psychology at Duquesne University, in Pittsburgh, where they teach phenomenological theories, which are very humanistic and existential. My intention was to be a therapist. I learned very quickly that I was not going to be a good therapist, I really was not called to that. So, I finished my Master's, I went back to Chicago and I said, "What do I want to do?" I took a year off—I was working at a pizza place—and I came across a little classified ad in *Psychology Today* for Montessori teacher training. Something clicked. I had come across Montessori, of all places, in Ayn Rand's work, where she endorsed Maria Montessori's method. I didn't have to have an education background. They were accepting anyone with a college degree. I started visiting a few Montessori schools and it just felt really right. I thought it would be a good way to apply my interest in psychology. I wasn't doing it because I wanted to teach young kids; I was doing it as a scientist and a serious intellectual. I was going to be like Montessori or Piaget and observe children and understand human nature. I have learned since that that was not a very authentic motivation and it didn't carry me very far.

M: How long did you stay in that training?
R: I finished the training, which was one year. I hated it because it was all prescriptions and methods—OK, you do this, you do that, here's how you do this.
Ellen: Was it a Catholic institution?
R: Oh, no. This was one of the Association Montessori Internationale training programs.
M: Did it come out of Italy or was it American?
R: AMI is the international governing body that was founded by Montessori, so there are American branches of it, but it is very strict.
M: But the model of the training is strongly influenced by the Italian, I would assume. Have you ever been in Italy and watched people taking children to the beach from schools? They have to be covered from wrist to ankle and neck all the way down to the bottom of the body. They cannot show one inch of flesh when they go to the beach. The Italians who "do it right," institutional Italians, are very strict with children, so it doesn't surprise me when you say that the Montessori thing was pretty tight.
R: I didn't like the training, but I did make it through and I taught pre-school children for one year and was not very good at it.
M: You discovered you didn't really love kids that age. Right? (laughing)?
R: Yeah, but I thought, well, maybe I'll do better with older kids because we can have more conversations and get into history and geography and all those things I like to do. So, I went back for a summer training to teach the elementary grades and got a job in Scituate, a town south of Boston. I lasted until the middle of October. It was a terrible situation and I was young and naive and idealistic and I really didn't know how to handle things. I wasn't exactly fired and I didn't exactly quit, but the school owner and I just said, 'This isn't working." One of the problems—and this was really a crucial turning point for me—was that we had all these parents with six- or seven- or eight-year-old kids saying, "Where's the homework? Where are the workbooks? Why aren't my kids reading yet?" All this pressure. I kept saying, "Slow down, slow down." I was coming from my humanistic psychology, libertarian point of view. "Don't worry about it. Your kids are having a good time;" which they were—the kids loved it. The parents didn't trust me. A couple of them took their kids out of the school. As a parent now, I look back and see what I did and I think, "Well, I might not like that kind of teacher either."
M: Really?!

R: Well, it was quite a bit more like what you do here, where it is laid-back. It didn't bother me if kids weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing. This was an upscale suburb and the parents were sending them there because they wanted this fast track and I wasn't giving it to them. That experience made me sit back and say, "What is going on here? I have learned all these things—that you can trust children, you don't have to push them, what is all this pressure about? " That's when I decided first of all that I was no good teaching kids, but also I was very curious about our culture and why we have these ideas about education.

M: But do you know how long it took me to cool out in our school and not get anxious? I am a parent, after all, and I've had five kids and even though, theoretically, the idea of the Free School where the kids get to choose and everything is really relaxed and so on, I kept saying, "Hey, we ought to buy some more workbooks, right, Chris?" And, "Do the third graders really know how to compute?" and this kind of thing. It took me a long time and I'm not as uptight as those parents of yours, but lots of our parents were uptight. So, we are all products of the society. It just takes a while to realize that what you read and what makes sense to you really works. I read *Summerhill* and all that stuff, but even so, I would get anxious.

R: Well, I've learned just in these last four or five years of my life that even having read and mastered this literature, I understand the principles of it—but clearly my own subconscious or shadow side or whatever you want to call it, needs more structure and expects more whatever—discipline, order, control—than the intellectual side of me. This has really come out with my own kids. I get very uncomfortable when they fight or they don't do what I want them to do. I really need things to be orderly. I am constantly fighting with myself. "Wait, this isn't what I have been writing about for the last ten years, why am I feeling this?" It has been a great growth for me to bring those two sides of my own psyche together and find a less idealistic way of saying, "Well, these are good ideas and this is who I am and I can't stop feeling this way, but there's got to be a way to work with that."

M: The main difference between you and other conscientious fathers is that you tell the truth about it. I think it is more true of fathers than mothers. There's a work ethic and you can see the stages that move toward opportunities that give you the options. You get sold very thoroughly in our society in the lock-step progression concept that if you don't go through X, Y and Z stages, you're never going to make it into A, B and C fields no matter how

much you might like it. Actually, I think people have an awful lot more to do with where they land and make their lives than we're usually told in the hierarchical concept of skills learning and this kind of thing and learning all about the world. I'd love to have you respond to that. You're saying that you want your kids not to fight and to do their job and to get on.
R: My concern for my kids is not related to acquiring skills or what careers they might have. It has much more to do with my level of comfort with some chaos. I am really not worried about where they end up. Right now they're talking about being carpenters and that would be great, that would be fine with me. If they never go to college and want to be carpenters, I would support that, I'm not worried.

Living with young children, I'm finding this other side of me coming out that needs more order. I guess it was easy for me as a twenty-five year old without my own kids to let that disorder be there in the classroom and go home and have all my books lined up and my clothes put away and not have so much order in school. Although, even in the school, I took the library and I put little markers on every single book so that we would know exactly where they belong, so we could find them. I need that, even if the kids don't.
M: There's nothing wrong with that; I think it's great.
R: It's just that I find I need more of that in my own house now and the kids don't live that way.
M: What brand of fathering did your father pursue with you? He seems like a very relaxed guy, isn't he? I met him at Goddard.
R: Yeah, he's generally speaking a very kind person and certainly was not punitive at all. But he had definite ideas about what is the right way to do something and what isn't. I don't think I had a whole lot of room to explore different options, which is why it was exciting to me when I left home and was in college to be discovering different ways of thinking about the world, because I just wasn't exposed to that at home.
C: At what point did the idea of starting the *Holistic Education Review* crystallize? And then I'll ask you why you started it.
R: There's one step before that. After I left teaching, the next year I started at Boston University again, in American Studies. I have always been a real interdisciplinary scholar and could not confine myself to one department like history. I rejected very quickly the idea of going for a doctorate in education. I really wanted to study American culture and how education reflects the culture—and that is an interdisciplinary study. So, I was in American

Studies. It's funny—the whole first half of my life was comprised of what looked like false starts. I thought I was going to be a psychologist and I dropped that. I thought I was going to be a teacher of young children and I dropped that. I thought I was going to be a scholar in American Studies and then it became clear, "No, I really don't want to be a university professor and deal with all these politics. I am an activist. I'm going to take these ideas and somehow change the world."

M: But you needed to follow the steps to be equipped. I did the same thing, including having five kids and getting a nursing degree and having all these obstetrical experiences. But it all falls into place.

R: Yes, and maybe that responds to your point a while ago that you can't lay out your educational path because you don't know what sort of accidents you may come across. Montessori had a phrase about that. In the Montessori classroom, almost all activities have an indirect purpose. A child may be arranging beads and you think it's a math exercise. But the indirect purpose is that they are doing their fine motor control work. Montessori said,"The preparations for life are always indirect." So you never know where things are going to lead.

So, where this led me was that I was just about to finish my doctoral work in American Studies and I said, " What am I going to do with this? How am I going to be an activist scholar?" I was at a conference in Des Moines, Iowa, with the public alternative school people in 1986 and I got to talking with Mary Ellen Sweeney, who had corresponded with me. Over lunch one day, we just suddenly said, "There ought to be a journal that represents these kinds of ideas." That was it; that was the beginning of *Holistic Education Review*. If you remember, Mary Ellen was co-editor for a couple of years.

M: Did you write your first book, *What Are Schools For?*, after you started *HER*?

R: I did the research for it while I was in graduate school. That was going to be my dissertation and, as it turned out, my advisors did not accept it. Even though I was in American Studies, which I interpreted as a broad way of looking at things where you are not confined, my advisors were from traditional disciplines—a philosopher and a historian—so neither of them could quite get what I was doing. It wasn't scholarly and grounded enough for them. So, the book was basically written by the time I started the *Review*. Once I started the journal, I thought, "Oh, I'm a publisher now, why I don't I just publish my book." And that's what happened.

M: I did the same thing, as you know. How did you find Charlie [Jakiela, Holistic Education Press, in Brandon, VT, the publisher of *HER* and of Ron's books]?

R: After the conference where I had made the decision to start a journal, I went to the B.U. [Boston University] library and started looking at journals and asked, "Which of these journals looks like something I'd like to do?" I found this series of journals that ironically enough were all in the field of psychology put out by this little company in Brandon, VT. Well, I figured I'd call them and see what they could teach me about journal publishing. That was Charlie.

M: He sure is a good guy.

C: He is very generous in that way.

R: I had no idea who this guy was. I just called and he said, "Come on up," and I spent the day with him and he taught me the ropes, and I started the Holistic Education Press. Now he's running the show.

M: Does Charlie do the whole thing?

R: He has subcontractors. He hires a printing company and he has free-lance copy editors and people like that.

M: Are you in a lot of libraries?

R: Well, it's not me anymore, I mean *Holistic Ed. Review* hasn't been mine since 1991. Jeff Kane edits it now. But it is in quite a few academic libraries.

C: So why the name *Holistic Education Review*?

R: That's a very appropriate question because, as of 1998, it is not going to be called that any more. They are dropping that name, they are going to call it *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*. Jeff [Kane, the current editor] and Charlie both are feeling that the word holistic is...

M: It's an oxymoron.

R: I still think it's the best word to describe the kind of ideas that it represents.

M: Education is about differentiation and accumulation and sifting and valuing. Holistic is woolly. It's broad, it's undefinable.

R: You sound like one of my advisors talking about my dissertation.

M: Oh, well, maybe that's a character flaw, I don't know.

R: But no, I don't think that's a flaw, that's the issue, though.

M: It brings people in who don't know which end is up.

R: Well, that's true.

M: And that's why.
R: But that's like Gatto dumping on Froebel and Pestalozzi because they were appropriated by the German pedagogues.
M: Yes, and he's wrong. I agree with you entirely.
R: So, I wouldn't reject the use or the concept of holism just because it happens to attract New Age enthusiasts.
C: I would like us to play it straight. I'd like Ron to talk about why did you decide to call it that at the time and then we can go forward into whether your perspective has changed any, and what about the criticism—we can do that later.
R: I came up with the name in 1986 or 1987. I think I chose it for exactly the same reason that John Miller did. John is not related to me but has been an advocate for holistic education in Canada for all these years. He chose the term for the same reason. We both had this background in humanistic psychology and the movement or counter-culture that hangs around the humanistic psychology/human potential movement, toward the end of the seventies and the early eighties, started using the terms holistic, holism: Fritjof Capra, those kind of people, people around that group.

It attracted both John Miller and myself because it seemed to encompass not only the personal growth that the humanistic psychologists talk about, but the spiritual dimension, the ecological movement and some sense of social change, which, even though it is not well developed among that particular group, at least there is an awareness that society and culture are involved also. So, I was not going to use the word "humanistic" because that already means certain things and doesn't include these other dimensions—and there was no other word that embraced all these things.
M: Did you think of the concept of holistic education as leading to a variety of schools like the humanistic and progressive and free and alternative?
R: No, from the very beginning I felt that the term holistic is an umbrella term, a way of thinking rather than a description of any one method or ideology. When I first came here to the Free School in 1984, I was deliberately going to different kinds of schools. I came here, I went to Montessori schools, I went to a Sufi school in Boston, and my questions, if you remember, were, "Do you consider yourself holistic in your approach? I am doing a dissertation on holistic education and I think you fit into that somehow and I want to find out what you do and how does that fit in." So, I've always seen that term as very inclusive.

M: When I visited Scott Forbes* at Oxford last spring, the first thing he wanted to know was where are the holistic education-oriented schools? I said the only one I know is Robert Muller and Gloria Crook's.

R: It's true. In the early eighties, I think there were more of these, maybe six or seven around the country. Linda Campbell ran an alternative in the Seattle area, but it was not just an alternative. It was clearly holistic, but that sort of goes around in circles there—I'm begging the question. She was interested in multiple intelligences, spirituality, ecology—all these things—and made a very deliberate effort to make that part of the school. To make that central to your educational purpose to me says that that is a holistic school. We are interested in spirituality and ecology, although we're not going to force it down children's throats. To answer Scott's question, would he come to the Free School and say," Oh here's one of the holistic schools"? I'm saying, well no, he probably wouldn't. He's got something more particular in mind. Linda Campbell's school and Robert Muller's school, because they make those elements really central, are holistic schools. But there just aren't that many others that are so explicitly holistic.

C: The Free School does make each of those ideas extremely central.

M: But I don't think Ron is challenging that. It's a question of how you define your curricular goals.

C: Well, I would just say that the difference with us is that we neither indoctrinate kids nor compel them. We don't do things in a compulsory way and we don't push. I think you have to look at some of the demographics of the different schools, perhaps. Maybe some of the schools don't have such an extraordinarily wide range of diversity amongst the kids and we do. We've got Muslim kids and Buddhist kids and poor kids and rich kids and middle-class kids and white kids and Hispanic kids and Japanese kids! You have to be really sensitive when you have that range—you can't sell a particular brand of anything—it would be inappropriate. You have to stay pretty general. So spirituality is wide open—nine kids might have nine different beliefs.

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* A former longtime headmaster at a Krishnamurti school in England who is doing graduate study at Oxford University on holistic education, which he told me is a "first" for the university.

R: Well, there's a couple of issues going side by side here. What I would think of as a good, holistic school is not one that is specifically religious. I keep coming back to Linda Campbell's work just because it's probably the best example I can think of. They weren't teaching religion there. I think her approach could've worked with a range of families. I don't know exactly who went to her school, so we're not talking about indoctrination here, so much as what do you actually do with the kids. Someone like Linda would sit down and do a visualization with them, really try to get their imagination going. My impression is that you at the Free School trust the children's imagination already; it's not something you make explicit, saying, "OK, kids, let's put on some nice music and close our eyes."
C: The closest model to the Free School these days is the unschooling model. Everything does come up in the context of school life. For instance, we might be focusing on spirituality in some way because somebody died. Or one of the kids just comes in and his grandfather is really sick. So, there it is, we'll get together and we'll pray or we'll visualize sending him help or sending him relief of his fear or whatever seems appropriate. The kids will have ideas for rituals. It's contextual in that sense. It's organic. It's a good word to describe what we do.
R: I would call that holistic in the fact that you do allow it to be there.
M: But the difference that I'm looking at here, listening to how this is going, is that we do not hire people who have certain characteristics or talents or interests to do X, Y or Z. We've never hired a teacher, that's number one. We invite people to come and teach anything they feel like teaching with us and then we may critique how they are with the kids, or the kids may say it.

The issue of what goes on in the school comes out of who the teachers are. In other words, it's Rogerian,* if you want to put it that way, it's not centered on content or philosophy, it's centered on personhood—the personhood of the children, the personhood of the teacher. That is number one with us, every step of the way. For example, if a kid has a problem, if an adult has a problem that they cannot resolve by themselves, they call a Council Meeting and everything stops. It's the people that matter and the way the people interact is the core of the school. I don't call that holistic because it always seems to me to be focused on the activity and what's going on, or the way you define your activity. Chris' book is called, *Making It Up As We Go Along*, because it comes out of who you are. Each person who is in the school is going to do it in the way that they like and that makes sense to them.

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* Referring to Carl Rogers, a "Humanistic Psychology" writer who called his approach "Person-centered."

C: I did use the word holistic a couple of times because it worked to describe that.

M: Fine! I was jerking Ron's chain, but only in the sense that it's like what happened to Froebel. Froebel himself did not believe in having children do this, this and the other. Elizabeth Ferm said, "Leave them alone, let them do what they choose to do. You can give them the gifts but you do not prescribe." I don't like prescriptions for children. There's a study of eating that was done in the forties or earlier. A nutritionist put out different bowls or plates with all kinds of food and they let these little two-and-a-half and three-year-olds pick what they wanted and they recorded what the kids chose. It went on for a month and they chose a well-balanced diet. They did fine. It's really true that there are natural Gestalten, as Fritz Perls says, that come up because the need is there. If you give kids the chance to fulfill that criterion, whatever it is, then he will move on to the next one. So, that's what I mean by holism. It's person-centered.

R: And I would totally agree. I'm not making a rigid distinction by saying you're not holistic and they are, but it is just a different flavor.

M: Right. I had a hard time making Scott Forbes understand that. He wants data, he wants curricular data, and it just doesn't work on that level.

R: I'm not sure how to tie up this idea here because this is such an open-ended and ongoing discussion. There is no resolution of it, but I'm remembering that I said there were two parallel points. The second one was that holism that came out of a very upper-middle-class movement. These people have a lot of time on their hands and don't have to worry: "Well, my dad will get me into an ivy league school anyway." You've talked about this a lot, Mary, that people in that position, even though they are all very nice and friendly, they're really not all that in touch with the Shadow*—with conflict.

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* Referring to Carl Jung's concept of the "dark" or hidden aspects of the personality that one chooses to deny the

As you say, people like that may tend to avoid personal conflict, so when you talk about your school being a place where the human connection is really what counts, that's what generates your school. Maybe at this more pristine image of a holistic school, it wouldn't happen with as much depth because the people—and I'm speaking for myself, I'm not putting this on other holistic educators—we want to believe that there is this nice, spiritual atmosphere that we can create and expose children to it and everything will be wonderful. I think there is some truth to that—I would certainly rather provide a nice, nourishing atmosphere than not, but there is also the Shadow, as I've learned in my own parenting.

C: So, your perspective has changed over time, you would say, from when you started the *Review*?

R: Yes, and even when I started the *Review*, I did not have in mind that holistic education meant only an airy-fairy, crystal-gazing kind of school. I meant to include free schools and Waldorf Schools and Quaker schools and Progressive Schools, but it's true that my own thinking at the time was New Agey. I thought, OK, let's bring in the spirituality and that's going to transform the world. I have changed in that. I still think that has to be part of it, but I'm much more interested in democratic social change, in rolling up our sleeves and saying, "This culture is not going be changed by a lot of love and peace and meditation. It's going to be changed by a lot of hard work, in addition to meditation."

M: Stephen Gaskin visited the commune in England and they're all hippies, you know, "Yeah, man, we got freedom, cool, groovy" and all that. Stephen says, "How do you make a living?" "Hey, man, we're on the dole, man." That's it. None of us want to look at the issue of being spoon-fed.

R: Right. Kozol, in his book, *Free Schools*, was tremendously angry about that.

M: Yes, very! He's come to see that the bottom of the ladder economically has more genuine spirituality in a great many cases. Spirituality is not something that is easily defined in terms of crystals and meditation.

C: Ram Dass says, "God comes to the hungry in the form of food."

M: Chris has just done a review of the book by the "Rabbi of Times Square," Yehudah Fine, who works with street kids like the

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existence of, since it contains all of the qualities and issues one would just as soon not know about.

ones gathered in by the "Covenant House" people in New York City. These kids who are on drugs and prostitutes—real street kids. It's beautiful, it's absolutely beautiful—it's like something that has never been tapped. You get that pure spirit. I don't want to sentimentalize it, because it is not sentimental, but when we tend to look hierarchically and find spirituality where there is no economic pressure and where people have been brought up in that way, I think these people are fundamentally deprived spiritually. They define spirituality in terms of the pictures that they have in their minds instead of getting down into the gut level of what is really sweet. Jesus says, "It is as difficult for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." I think it's true; that's where the real spirituality lies. Yehudah Fine uses Maimonides. If you read Maimonides, boy does he have it!

R: Well, I have one more thought on this. I would still stick with the word holistic because when I do look at the whole picture as I understand it, including some kind of spirituality but also the need for social change where our technology is leading us and the whole thing, I agree with people like Theodore Roszak or Ken Wilber or Charlotte Spretnak or Jeremy Rifkin—these are my holistic teachers. What they're saying is that you need to go back to the roots of our epistemology, to why our modern culture is the way it is. It is not just an economic issue or a class issue—it really comes down to how we understand the world. Our understanding in the modern age is reductionistic and fragmenting and overly rational. To me, holism is the answer to that. Let's go beyond our modern reductionism and expand how we understand reality. That's what I mean by holism. It would include spirituality, but it does not necessarily mean that you have to go out and convert everybody to a particular way of meditating.

M: George Dennison used to say, "I can't understand these people who want to work with street people and working-class people and welfare kids—they're so narrow and boring. They have such a narrow point of view." It's amazing to me to see that, yes, they have a narrow point of view to start with, but they just take it right in, given the opportunity to resolve whatever the Gestalten are that have kept them narrow. It isn't cultural, it comes out of the personhood, again. That's my only objection to that concept. It starts too far out in the culture instead of starting inside the human soul.

R: Well, it's both. What I mean by holism is that you've got to look at both and get beyond liberal versus conservative, or left versus libertarian. The right wing focuses on the individual. The individual is this autonomous unit. Social change happens one person at a time. In general, that's how you would characterize libertarian thinking. Whereas, the left is always emphasizing social structures.

I go back to my roots. I myself came out of an tremendously individualistic place. Remember, I was even reading Ayn Rand. It was a revelation to me to start getting into the leftist literature, even John Dewey, who got from the social psychologist George Meade this idea that our individuality comes from society. You cannot take a person out and say, "Oh, that's your essence there that you bring to society." Who you are in your individuality is shaped by society. The radical left wing, the critical pedagogy kind of people, are very clear on that point. So, what I mean by holism is that I want both. I want to look at the structures, the culture, the epistemology which we inherit, but at the same time, I want to look at how we as individuals can work with that and can go beyond it. I still believe in a spiritual essence that transcends society.

M: But then you see, there's the issue of pedagogy. You look at the difference between Dewey and his writings and the progressive schools. You get the transference of the data of the theoretical construct into the pedagogy. That's what happened to Froebel, to Montessori, to Steiner. How can we translate these things into pedagogy without looking at developmental phenomena one person at a time, both adult and child? How can you leave that out of the account? I agree with you about the environmental, cultural things—we are the products of our culture—so what do you do to go from there to here? Pedagogically, how do you jump that gap?

R: Well, I'm thinking of a couple of people I've read who have addressed that. There's a woman up in Montreal who teaches at an alternative college named Greta Nemieroff. She wrote a book a number of years ago called *Reconstructing Education*. She said you've got to take Maslow and these self-theorists on the one hand, and you've got to take Paulo Freire on the other hand and bring them together. She's looking at these mostly alienated college-aged, mid-twenties students and saying, "You've got to look at why are you poor? Why are you working class? Why are you subject to the manipulation of the media? You've got to look at that stuff. But aside from that, what's meaningful to you? What do you love and hate in your life? Where are you going in your life?" You bring those together. And why can't you be the person you want to be? Are there social restrictions or oppression that has nothing to do with your insides or your spirituality but is preventing you from expressing that? So, that's one way that I would respond to that.

C.A. Bowers is another thinker who has addressed this very well. He has taught in Oregon and written a lot of books. He mostly focuses on the environmental crisis and how we are all ostriches with our heads in the sand because we are ignoring it in education. That's his passion, but his critique goes deeper than that. He says the reason that we're ignoring it and destroying the atmosphere and the oceans is because our culture tells us that this is progress, that this is good. That we need to ransack the world in order to be rich and happy and all that. Until you change our culture, which is the way we think about reality, you are not going to solve the environmental crisis.

M: When you move from that level to the level of the teacher in a room with kids, how do you prepare that teacher, and what is that teacher supposed to do?

R: In education, it's a process of making explicit those things that we take for granted. So, when you're in a group of children , you have to make it explicit with your students: "Hey, you're being conditioned by this culture. Let's talk about what is progress, what is success? What do you mean by that? What messages do you get from the media about that? Does that work any more; can we live on this planet with these messages?"

M: You must be talking about high school age, you can't do that with a five-year-old.

C: Well, I do it sometimes, but I do it with our elementary-aged kids. We do it in a contextual way. I don't start the year with a curriculum mapped out that in the seventh week of the year with the fifth graders, we are going to discuss the influence that advertising has on their personal choices. But it comes up; it's always going to come up.

M: How we do it is also through the council meeting, because we use Robert's Rules of Order and we teach rules of evidence. So and so says such and such happened and somebody else will say, "I was there and that's not what I saw." Then somebody else will say something else and we get to the root of all of these issues and kids learn marvelous techniques for being good witnesses. I think this is how we teach people to see the difference between appearance and reality. They leave our school knowing the world they are in and looking at how people function and keeping their center. I think this is the principal way they learn it, because in the beginning of the year, we may have three or four council meetings a day or several a week. It dwindles gradually, but they get a lot of training and very strict discipline. It is always a kid who is the chairman and if a kid misbehaves during the meeting, they sit in the corner—that's the way the kids have chosen to do it. It works.

C: We're not as laid-back as you think, I guess. It is a misconception to think that we have a laid-back approach. It just isn't a planned matter. We don't do things in a planned way—situations occur where those lessons are imbedded in the circumstances and then we're not laid-back at all. If kids suddenly need to see how damned conditioned they are by what they are watching on television, for instance, I don't hesitate for a minute to say, "Hey, look at this! You're acting as though you're on some ##!!**%& stupid cop show! Your mind has been poisoned by all this television." I'll lay it right out for a child if that's appropriate.

M: But it's not a theoretical thing. If you taught on a theoretical basis, you'd have to have every single kid in the same place—and they're not.

R: Here's where theory comes in and why I think it's important to read these books, even though I agree it's not enough. The way you respond to those situations reflects your orientation. If you were middle-American, white-bread kind of folks and you were really interested in football...

C: Well, I am.

M: He was pretty white-bread—hippie variety—when he came, but we've learned with each other. Gradually, we've learned what works.

R: But it's not just a question of what works. There's a wonderful book called *School Cultures,* by Mary Henry. In it, she compares a Waldorf school to a traditional prep school and she says it does come down to who you are as a person, what your values are, what is important to you. Let's take two schools and in both cases you are going to say, we're going to follow the kids' lead, we're not going to come in with a curriculum, we're not going to indoctrinate, we're going to respond to the kids. But if you have one group of people who are ecological and spiritual and alternative and another group of people who are white-bread, all-American patriotic, whatever, you're going to respond in different ways. So, you respond to this violent play by saying you're being brain-washed by TV, Chris. Someone else could respond to that by saying, good, you're practicing for the military, you're going to be a good soldier and tough guy.

M: So, you're saying that behind all that, behind the personhood, is the culture and the question is, "What kind of cultural considerations do you need to be a good a teacher?" And you do go back to what is my background, what have I learned, what do I believe, who am I?

R: Who am I, which is more than what I read. So you are right about all that, but if I hadn't read all that I read, I would still be conservative.

E: I think your teaching experience didn't give you the opportunity to explore where you were heading. You were a very different kind of teacher than the school you were in permitted and you didn't have a chance to experiment with where your leanings were going and your background didn't encourage you to think that you had somewhere to go, so you thought that you weren't a good teacher and you abandoned the experiment of your way of looking at teaching based on what the school's reaction was to you.

R: It's interesting. If I had come to Albany, New York in 1982 instead of Scituate and gotten a job here, it would have been a totally different experience.

C: So, you started the *Review* as a form of activism. You hoped that it would create social change at the level of ideas. How would you assess, looking at it now, whether it has done that? Has it had the impact you wanted?

R: Oh, definitely not. The highest subscription level I got to was about two thousand people. The paradox of being in this kind of work is that on the one hand, you can immerse yourself in this alternative culture and feel like there's something happening, there's a movement happening, and you get letters from all over and you feel, WOW, there's really something happening out there. Then on the other hand, you step out of that and you look at the daily newpaper or the television or *Reader's Digest*, and you're invisible, you don't exist. I had this experience yesterday. I got Marshall Fritz's latest newsletter from the Separation of School and State Alliance, and they're getting all excited: they have three thousand signers to their proclamation and they're well on their way to 25 million. I thought, come on, you're nowhere near 25 million! So, in terms of whether *Holistic Education Review* makes a meaningful contribution to changing education in this country, no, nothing measurable. Even in a small way, one thing I had hoped was that the people who do write in established educational publications would look at this journal and say, "Oh, here's some folks who have something to say. They sound like a bunch of granola crunchers, but they make some sense." That didn't even happen. It was never quoted anywhere, so I was very disappointed about that. On the other hand, it brought a little movement together, it brought some people out of the woodwork and gave them a platform. My book is used in several courses. I think I have sold about six or seven thousand copies and there are a bunch of teachers out there who have been exposed to these kinds of ideas. I don't know that it has changed their lives.

M: I think it's great—it's a lot more than we've been able to do.

R: Well, you really don't know what effect you're having or who will come across it who will then go on to have some effect.

M: I'm still selling copies of *Challenging the Giant*, several a week. It keeps going, but it's very small. People just come across it and they say, hmmm, and they send for it.

R: One thing that struck me in my historical studies was looking at all these idealistic educators. Bronson Alcott is a great example. They're so far out there and so irrelevant to where the culture is going. You can just say, "Well forget it, what's the point?" But on the other hand, they're touching people's lives and they're giving an example or a model that when the culture is ready, when things change and they have to change, the models are going to be there, the ideas are going to be there.

M: Have you seen Alice Howell's book, *How Like an Angel Came I Down*? Just reading what the kids are saying is lovely. It is so sweet. I wouldn't say that he was just a drop in the bucket. What he did had integrity. Look at what Louisa May Alcott did with it. She was brought up in that atmosphere of her father and she wrote all those books and people read her books all over the place. That's where I got it—from reading her books when I was a kid, when it counts. That's when I wanted to start a school.

R: So there is a very interesting, indirect influence.

C: Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. It is the only way that it has ever happened."

R: I know; and it tends to be the activist creed.

M: Look at Sacco and Vanzetti—poor little shoemakers in the North End of Boston.

R: The point I was going to make was that I think it's more the issue of change through individual change versus the structural. I think it's the people who are more the individual sorts who quote Margaret Mead. You wouldn't find too much of that on the left because they say, "No, it's not a small group of people, you need to overthrow capitalism. A few of us aren't going to do that."

M: Do you adhere to the concept that you've got to overthrow capitalism and that it takes a lot of people?

R: I'm not as idealistic as I used to be, because I think we're going to need substantial social change before these educational ideas are acceptable. Whether that means completely overthrowing capitalism or some kind of modification, I don't know. I like Michael Lerner's take on that, in *The Politics of Meaning*. He says he's an agnostic when it comes to capitalism. If you can have a social democracy with a free enterprise system, that's great, let's do it. If capitalism is in the way of that, then let's get rid of it. I'm not rabid left-wing, let's dump the system, but if it turns out, and I wouldn't be surprised if it turns out, that this multi-national, corporate control of the world is not going to allow us to live humane lives, we've got to do something about it.

M: I believe in one thing only that Marx said. That is that the structure will wither away when it is no longer viable. I don't think anything else is likely to change this. As an alcoholic does not give up alcohol until he gets to the place where he says, "It's killing me," if he does, and "I can't do it by myself." He joins Alcoholics Anonymous, which means intentionally turning over control to someone who's bigger than he is. I don't think things work by a whole bunch of people overthrowing anything. I don't think people are the products of their institutions—well, they are in a sense, but what they do about that is on the inside and they have to do the changing on their own. I think they should be provided the information and the opportunities to make those changes, but I don't see Christianity having created a bunch of saints on earth. I think that the Jewish influence on people is more relevant than the Christian. So, you can influence people, but all of the influence of Judaism that I get is to change inside. You can look at the Shadow and decide what you can do about it and this kind of thing.

R: Well, that's not all, because Judaism gives rise to a lot of social activism.

M: Of course. It comes out of, "When if not now, who if not I?"

R: But the last part of that is, "If I'm only for myself, than what am I?" Other people need to have the same opportunity I do to grow and find meaning.

E: Well, my own theory is that you change people's perceptions one person at a time. When it becomes a big enough wave ... what is that quote? "There's no power like that of an idea whose time has come." Then when there are enough people in the culture whose perceptions have been shifted, then all of a sudden, something taps into it, like a candidate comes and speaks to it—that's when things happen. So when you're writing something like your journal or our journal, we're talking to people and on an individual level, one at a time, people's perceptions are shifting. When this gathers enough force, it has an impact on the culture.

R: If it does. That has always been my hope, that it would gather enough force.

E: You are a very impatient person?

R: Well, that's true.

M: So am I.

R: There's part of me who is somewhat intrigued by Rudolf Steiner, who says that there's this spiritual force directing history; it's not so much that we are just puppets—he definitely encourages people to work consciously—but we are being guided, we are being pushed along by the force of history. The German word, *Zeitgeist*, spirit of the time, is an actual thing, not just a metaphor.

M: Well, that's what Ellen is talking about, isn't it?

R: No, she's saying that our efforts will have a causal relationship.

E: Yes, I do see it that way. I do think individual effort is required or none of these things would happen.

M: Yes, I see it in terms of the *Zeitgeist* and then something alchemical comes along and it changes.

R: As I understand Steiner, he is saying there are forces of light and darkness and that if we work hard enough with the forces of light, we can prevail, but that the forces themselves are beyond human beings.

E: I am not in disagreement with that. But you have a choice as an individual whether to open yourself to them or not, and whether you make that choice positively or negatively has an influence on your times.

R: I guess the reason I am intrigued by this is that those of us who work so hard at this, and you look at Bronson Alcott or Francisco Ferrer, martyrs, or myself reading humanistic psychology as a college student and saying, "Why isn't the world like this?" I guess it helps to think that, well, I've discovered this, it makes sense to me, but there's a historical force here that's much bigger than that and we're just not ready. You're saying I'm an impatient person; well, maybe that gives me patience. I can't fight the forces of destiny. I can do the best I can, but to think that a few of us are going to overthrow destiny, that's where we get trapped.

M: Yes, that is exactly my feeling. You just do it and do it and you know inside that when it's time, it will happen and not a moment before. It doesn't mean that what you're doing is irrelevant, you've got to do it. Absolutely. It's part of it. At the synagogue, they were saying, "There's light and there's dark and just a few good people, just you inside yourself go for the light, you may tip the balance and God may say, "OK, OK." I love that. It's important that we all look at how precious it is to have our hearts in the right place.

E: There is a quote in the housing project over in Troy from Gandhi. "Although the next that you do may seem very small, it is very important that you do it."

M: Well, we may end it there, but I would like to hear about your take on Gatto's speech at Naropa and what happened to the audience. He just seized them and they were uplifted and stood up and clapped all those minutes. What was it that you heard him saying that seized their imagination and their hearts?

R: Gatto has that effect on most audiences I've seen because he is a prophet. A prophet is someone who can take a great deal of rage and outrage and focus it and put out a call for justice and a call for healing that is very, very powerful. That's what he does. I think that is what people respond to and that is what I respond to when I hear him. Here's somebody who is looking at where we are as a culture and saying, "This doesn't work, folks, this is an outrage. We've got to change."

Many of us at Naropa, we're nice, spiritual intellectual people and we talk about the problems, but we don't urge people to stand up and make the change. I liked the content of his talk at Naropa better than the previous three or four of his talks that I had heard because he dropped most of the conspiracy theorizing. That goes back to that right-wing, left-wing thing. If you're coming from a libertarian perspective and don't believe in social forces, then you have to blame a bunch of individuals who somehow get together and control things. That's where conspiracies come from. Left-wingers don't believe in conspiracies. It's clear to them, if they're correct, that the system itself is causing these problems. If you can't blame a system, you've got to blame a bunch of bad guys. So, I think that's where Gatto gets his conspiracy theories from.

M: This is really important.

R: At Naropa, Gatto stayed away from conspiracy theories for the most part and I really appreciated that. What he was talking about was that our modernist secular culture is a pathological culture that has abandoned the religious and spiritual foundations that contributed good things to our society. Unfortunately, he located his insight in the concept of original sin which to me is going a whole step backward.
M: Wasn't that a figure of speech?
R: No, he was quite serious about it. He said that our Puritan, Congregational, ancestors put together such a good democratic community life because they were driven by the idea of original sin which required them to earn a living and to help people different from themselves. And then there's a lot of truth in that, no question.
M: But you know, he would be the first one not to do it himself.
R: Well, he's full of contradictions, isn't he.
M: I think he was getting at the inside image of what it was that caused them to create these democratic communities, but I didn't hear him advocating a return to that inner motivation.
R: Kind of like William James' "moral equivalent of war." We need a moral equivalent of war.
M: Yeah.
R: Okay, if that's what he was saying, I can buy that. I'd have to read it, I mean just sitting there listening to it, that was not clear to me.
M: He doesn't usually speak literally. He speaks a lot more in metaphors. I believe the concept of conspiracy is in that category. I don't think, if you pinned him down, you would get him to acknowledge a feeling that these bad guys have done this. I think he's painting a picture. It's kind of like Van Gogh.
R: I forgive him for that because I value him as a prophet so much. I'm willing to say, Sure, John, keep saying that if you must to get the people riled up. That's fine. But meanwhile, I am a historian, I'm an intellectual. I want to be more careful about what we're saying here. And for John to try to convince people that there's this handful of people who are pulling the strings... I want to say from an intellectual point of view, you've got to be more careful than that. It's just not all simple.

Sure there are some powerful people, maybe Andrew Carnegie did some things, that, in perspective, put society and education in a bad way that's been ignored, but to make it a very simplistic conspiracy theory kind of thing, I want to be more careful about that.

M: When you're up there hobnobbing with the movers and the shakers, is it too much to say that these things did happen because of the influence that people have and feeling like a member? Look at what happens at the Bohemian Grove out in California, Henry Kissinger rubbing elbows with high CEOs in industry...

R: But a leftist perspective, a social democratic perspective would say, they don't have power because they're Henry Kissinger, they have power because they are the ones running the institutions.

M: Of course.

R: It's the institutions that have the power. And if you start blaming some conspiracy, you're missing the boat. You're missing the work that needs to be done to take the system apart.

M: Okay. That's the level on which you're speaking , not in terms of the origins but in terms of how the system works.

R: Yeah, I think John could keep missing the system. I mean you could say he misses the forest for the trees. He's looking at a few trees and saying they're rotten and if all of us were to follow that and say, "Okay, let's get rid of the rotten trees," we've still got this system will keep producing more people to serve it.

M: Well, yes, I agree with you in some ways, but look at the difference between Izaak Rabin and Netanyahu. I think we might really have had a peace accord if Rabin hadn't been killed. Netanyahu was weaned on media manipulation and he got in because he knew how to manipulate those media. These are two individuals who have decided the fate of the Near East.

R: Right, but by themselves they couldn't do it. They can only influence the fate of the Near East because they're prime ministers of a government that has certain power. Netanyahu, if he were not elected prime minister, could rant and rave all he wanted without deciding the fate of the Near East.

M: John is talking about the influence of a few people at the peak of power, about the power structure that influences the way things go—and in that sense, I think he's right.

R: Well, he's right within a context of understanding the system. You can't just single out individuals.

M: No, that's true, but to dismiss it as a conspiracy....

Chris: I think it's important information, because most average citizens only read *Newsweek* and watch "60 Minutes," and they don't know that a small handful of very powerful men do get together and make economic policy, for example, and then that policy gets applied to the entire world. They've created a global economic system, but most of us don't realize that. Gatto points out who those powerful individuals are and that they are in fact creating policy every day and it's a very pointed policy. As you're saying, Ron, they're also the product of the institution.

M: It's too dismissive to say that John has a conspiracy theory. He is pointing to a few powerful individuals like the Trilateral Commission, and places like that. He's pretty good at pinpointing these things.

R: Well, it bothered me that in one speech, he was focusing on the phrase, "change agent." That we have all these educators going around calling themselves "change agents." And now you have this army of change agents out there. Well, you've got hundreds if not thousands of really sincere educators out there. People in the holistic education movement often call themselves "change agents." They're absolutely not connected with any conspiracy. And just because we take the ideas of Froebel, all of a sudden that doesn't associate us with Prussian schooling? I don't think so. But I've had this kind of relationship with John right from the beginning. I reviewed his book—it's a wonderful book—and called him a libertarian. We've been friendly critics of each other ever since.

M: This is why I wanted this interview. The winter issue is going to be Gatto-Miller: "Freedom in Education" with a liberal dose of Elizabeth Ferm.

Chris: In this corner weighing in at two hundred and seventy four pounds (laughter).

M: Em Pariser calls it the "Battle of the Titans," so you can be a Titan.

R: Oh boy.

M: Well, I think this is a good place to stop. Thanks for giving us so much of your precious time.

R. You're welcome. I enjoyed it.

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THE MORAL LOGIC OF PERPETUAL EVOLUTION
A Schoolteacher Looks at Technology in Education
by John Taylor Gatto

When I was twelve I learned to drive. On the day it happened it caught me by surprise. I was just hanging around Uncle Bud's printing office on a Saturday afternoon in Monongahela in the summer of 1947 when all of a sudden he said to me, "Let's take a ride, Jackson." The next thing I knew we were whizzing down an empty country road in his Buick Roadmaster convertible.

"It's time you knew how to drive, " he said. And so saying he seized the back of my neck forcibly with his right hand, focusing my attention at the base of the steering column.

"The long pedal makes it go. The square pedal makes it stop. Turn the wheel left when you want to go left, right when you want to go right That's all there is to it. Any questions? Good. Let's change seats."

Was I scared? Terrified. Wouldn't you be? How did I make out? Well, I wove all over my lane for a while but a few cracks across the head cured that in a hurry. Bud seemed to believe everyone was born already knowing how to drive.

I'm drawing an analogy here between the skill of driving in which your life is at risk from even a momentary lapse of attention and the skill of computer operation in which it isn't. Both are too easy to learn to make a big deal about it.

2.

The nation's largest architectural firm, Hellmuth-Obata, ignores computer savvy when they hire because architects can learn everything they need in a two-week training period, they say. Joe Weizenbaum, a professor of computer science at MIT, says that all the computer skill a student needs to succeed at the Institute can be learned from scratch "in a summer." And both recognize a downside to hanging around terminals too long.

LUCASArts Entertainment, an interactive gamemaker whose most important employees are artists, agrees. It prefers traditionally trained artists by a wide margin because painful experience has taught them that those who learned their art at a work-

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station show "stiffness and flatness, lack of richness and depth" in their work. Hewlett-Packard avoids hiring executives whose expertise is primarily computer, favoring instead liberally educated men and women. And Sherry Turkle, whose specialty as an MIT professor is studying children interacting with computers, concludes that the most popular programs used in schools—simulation games—dull insight and discourage precision.

3.

A schoolteacher would have to be nuts not to love technology. Once the machines were on I could turn off and get paid for daydreaming. Unlike the administration of tests, which is a purer racket with the same outcome, with tech I could feel justified watching the kids go numb because it made us both happy—and who knew, maybe it was good for them. As long as they didn't snort dope or visit terror on the weak and vengeance on the stoolie, I could hide electronically in the cracks opened up electronically. Tech keeps the brats quiet. We shouldn't lie to each other about this.

Whatever advantages tech has out in the real world, in classroom use it is child's play to pervert into a perfect tool for low-grade social engineering. Habitual use accustoms children to consume *without question* an invisible stranger's mind-altering drills. Undetectible agendas resonate splendidly through technology, and if that weren't enough reason to be wary, tech has its own non-human agenda. It must recruit its users as loyal participants in simplified abstract dramas with neat resolutions—thus denying them an understanding of the ambiguity in real situations.

I should have loved technology as a pedagogue because it takes the fight out of kids. As long as we plan to continue marginalizing children as radically as we've done throughout the 20th century to achieve certain economic and social goals, we need to avoid the kind of training known to develop intellect and character. Listening to machinery, like listening to Ritalin and Prozac, does the job for us neatly without excessive cost.

What has to be avoided to avert a too-well-developed mass citizenry is struggle with difficult texts; facility in the active literacies of public speaking and public writing; familiarity with the physical, emotional and intellectual danger in bowing to the demands of intellect; time spent learning to enjoy solitude; heavy exposure to mature people possessing specific competences; and experience with significant duties. None of these things require machinery to learn. Education and machines have very little in common.

As long as social managers believe students must be indoctrinated for various economic and philosophic purposes, they cannot be educated to understand that the formula for a good life has remained constant throughout the human record and doesn't cost very much. For instance, if you don't have something to hug regularly and sincerely, you don't have a very good life however many machines you may own.

4.

The conflict of permanent values like this one with the more energetic quest of searching for continuous novelty is an ancient contest, but characterizing the rapid change pole as "perpetual evolution" changes the equation somewhat, investing what would otherwise seem to be a form of madness like St. Vitus Dance with the dignity of progressive purpose. It implies a direction to history which would delight Herr [Professor] Hegel. Nothing is wrong with this as long as you realize that in logic it would be called begging the question, and that it is nothing more or less an act of religious faith.

Classical Greece cast this contest in the form of a dialectic between the words of Heraclitus, who said you never could step into the same river twice, and the words of Thales, who said no matter how much details change, it is always the same river. Heracliteans are compelled to minimize timeless realities like the not-so-innocent hug I mentioned, and particularly to minimize the inescapable fact of death, which is the same to all in all nations and times. Hugs and dying are beyond the reach of science, medicine or fast talk, and they are what education must invest its time in, not booting up, logging on or downloading.

Time is the only true currency and everyone has about the same amount of it. Children whose training has failed to teach them that are doomed to chase their tails endlessly. And here is another universal: *whatever* decision you make about your time—to fill it up with novelties or go on a quest for absolutes—there is no escape from risk. Only a choice of what risks to take. How then can education be possible without heavy experience in risk-taking, not simulations of it?

As a Thalean myself I have little patience with religious ecstasy about technology. It offers a great bag of tools, but there's a price to pay: when we use them, they use us in return; if we use them too often, we become servo-mechanisms ourselves.

To say that technology has any power to solve the human dilemma is just silly; instead, it aggravates the human dilemma, which is learning how to be fully human. Only one curriculum teaches that, a timeless one consisting of four lonely and difficult pursuits:

The first is learning a passion for hard work and giving your best to everything. The second is building a firm and sure moral sense tending toward the absolute so you can live a principled life rather than a pragmatic one. The third is building comprehensive self-mastery, which includes developing a dependable immunity to material incentives so that your liberty (and duty) is unassailable—not for sale, I mean. And the last involves developing the wisdom to accept pain, sickness, aging and death. All with a glad heart. Such a curriculum is within everybody's reach, there for the humble as well as the splendid, as long as we don't waste too much time in distractions like machinery.

Thales was the right-er, I think. But even if you disagree, I hope we still concur that young folks need to be conscious of this argument early, because as one or these outlooks becomes dominant, quite different curricular paths must be followed. With Thales, the grand purpose of education is knowing and mastering yourself; with Heraclitus comes the active, endless search for rich sensations, great projects and imposing your will on the flux—giving it an existential purpose like perpetual evolution. Bill Gates is Heraclitean; Mother Theresa and your local barber Thalean.

5.

Vikings were the Heracliteans of early modern Europe. No wonder we get the most advanced forms of corporate adventurings from their part of the map. The imposing technology of the longship, their amazing technology of warrior training—these allowed Vikings to terrorize Europe for many centuries in their quest to assuage boredom. Viking education simplified men and despised women, who were difficult to simplify. Morality was discarded, to be replaced by situational ethics.

So coherent and relentless was this pragmatic vision that only men who died in battle—those suddenly turned off like machinery—could earn Valhalla. Those few "evolved." Everyone else was just vegetation, endlessly dissolving and being reconstituted in the same soulless forms. No other system could compete with warriors propelled by such an inhuman spring.

Suddenly after five or six centuries of success, Scandinavians began to give up their murderous non-stop adventuring. Such a turn had happened before to high-tech peoples, the most dramatic instance being that of the Chinese, who by the 4th century had a technological lead over Europe estimated by historians to be as much as 1000 years. All at once China gave it up completely. Serious high-tech experimentation became a crime punishable by death; tremendous developments like explosives became toys like firecrackers. Nobody knows why.

And there is the case of Rome after five centuries of successful imperialism and bureaucratic articulation based on technological superiority. Rome just quit, too. About Rome we know a little more of the reasons. We know that ordinary Italians became disgusted with the emotional price they had to pay to maintain empire. They refused to waste their precious time in that stupid way any longer.

Three 18th century events conspired to bury the lessons of Thales in modern times: first was the 18th century Enlightenment; second was the exploitation of the fossil fuel coal in conjunction with machinery; and the third was the development of a fantastically rich global narcotics monopoly by the British. All these made it imperative for wealth-seekers to perfect the techniques of social engineering pioneered by Caesar, Machiavelli and Hobbes—to find effective ways to convert ordinary men, women and children into "human resources" if a golden opportunity to evolve society was to be seized and the take maximized.

The major obstacle in the path was the Judeo-Christian narrative interpreting life's meaning and duties, the sustaining logic of the West. It had to be scrapped. Throughout history Christianity had been nothing but grief for Heracliteans, and the folks mediating the social changes taking place at the turn of the 19th century were nothing if not Heracliteans. But what to replace Christianity *with*? A "civil religion" was needed to forestall populist uprising.

It's not unfair to say the theory of biological evolution, and the forced schooling reflecting the faith and spreading it, came along at exactly the moment they were needed most. Here was the substitution for the Christian story as far as the industrial management classes and their professionalized assistants were concerned. In Christianity salvation had to be earned on a case-by-case basis—the State was powerless to save you—but for evolutionists, salvation was a collective matter, one which required the community to organize expulsion of its deadwood and protect the privilege of its best breeding stock.

A bleak transformation in the idea of liberty was at hand. Universal liberty had been *proven* scientifically unsuitable for the masses. Then a second shoe fell. Over in France a philosopher named Comte cobbed together a new scientific religion called Positivism which drew its inspiration from the example of endlessly evolving machinery. Since mankind was only biological machinery, the same improvements could be achieved in mankind if evolutionary biology was established as the queen science, privileged counselor to state and corporate leadership.

The logic of evolutionism was implacable. Nothing less than unification of the entire human race and all the nations into a scientific breeding laboratory which would guide racial destiny. International businessmen were natural leaders of such an initiative, said Comte. His religion spread like wildfire through the upper reaches of the trans-Atlantic business community. In that fusion of wealthy men, ambition and opportunity, and justifications drawing on the name of Science for approval, a new secular religion with a blueprint for the experimental twentieth century came into being.

Mass forced schooling, a half-baked idea which had been around since Plato, was adopted as the social technology needed to bring second-class breeding stock to its senses. It was the ideal institution to unthread the Christian narrative and all other powerful wisdom traditions, replacing them in part with a close attention to Nature where "species cleansing"—what Darwin called "Natural Selection"—could be shown to be a kindness rather than a cruelty. Through other school subjects, the invisible hand of rational leadership could civilize Natural Selection, empowering men of affairs and their sons, wives and daughters as shepherds of Evolution. Sometimes we call this new religion "Progressivism" and sometimes we call it "Scientific Management."

The notion of manageable evolution as a master theme for the new century was embraced enthusiastically by Carnegie, Morgan and Rockefeller, and a complex professional management of society began to replace democratic management after 1890. In this new form, the mass population came to be viewed as laboratory creatures suitable for positivistic social experimentation.. Thus, constant change became the common experience. How people responded to these disruptions was "data" to be incorporated in policy thinking and the design of the next experiment. The direction of these essays was always toward further centralization in politics and economics, what party held office was irrelevant; electoral politics no longer provided the important leaders of social change. Schooling's role in this project was to follow a strategy of social management successfully developed by the Prussians, to strip children of the ability to think contextually. To this end Science was a wonderful tool because science is not about strategic thinking, but only about problem-solving. Technology is even better.

6.

So here we are. But before you climb on this bandwagon, you want to consider a few remaining obstacles standing in the way of managed evolutionary dynamism as the new background against which history is to be written. In the first place, billions of people regard Heraclitus or his effects as pathological. People whose core existence is wrapped inside modern technology are still in a decided minority. For instance, a full two-thirds of all men and women on earth have never made or received a single phone call to date. You see what I mean?

Then we have deliberate contrarians like the Old Order Amish. Far from being unable to defend their Thalean ways, they are the most successful entrepreneurs on earth according to Johns Hopkins and their prosperous, crime-free communities have multiplied 30x in population in this century.

Pushing on, what could it mean that as this most secular, most schooled and technified century ends, phenomenal growth is evident in the most old-fashioned evangelical religions worldwide, nowhere more explosively than in the USA? Many of their members have an active and increasingly combative hostility against experimentation on their kids. They too are multiplying like computer viruses.

Other signs that the market in expert-guided Heraclitean futures might not be one to invest in is the big, leaderless homeschool movement, a bold statement about the irrelevancy of professionalized leadership, or the rapidly-spreading jury nullification movement which freed Randy Weaver, or the startling revolution in finance which has quietly allowed rogue financial traders to strip governments and central banks of their monopoly control on the value of money.

Let me take a contrarian tack myself: if modernity is what I suspect a majority of the human race is coming to believe—a nightmare visited upon ordinary men and women by the quasi-religious enthusiasms of bored, morally hollow and comfort-dazed élites, then we are at a curious point in history where élite leadership has lost its claims to legitimacy as it did in the fall of Rome..

7.

All this brings us back to technology in education. What should its use be? If you are a Thalean, it is just one of many tools which might be used to the end of self-awareness; if a Heraclitean, it is a cornucopia—after all, even 12-year-olds can learn to drive. Through the computer religion children can easily learn to ferret out your secrets from the credit bureau, to draw down your bank balance, to arm government weapons systems, to use your credit cards, and to exchange simple, inexpensive formulas for nerve gas, fertilizer bombs, anthrax grenades, and more. I got this from the Net, why shouldn't they? But there are some pretty high costs involved in celebrating technology at the expense of an education.

Computers lead to bad relationships by taking time away from what really matters, time kids can't regain. The moral logic of technology is one of obedience, subordination and passivity in the face of experts. One carefully controlled study of the Reader Rabbit Reading Program, already in 100,000 schools, shows students who use it lose the power to answer open-ended questions. That shouldn't surprise you.

Judah Schwartz, director of Harvard's Educational Technology Center, said recently that "ninety-nine percent" of all available educational technology is "terrible, really terrible." Ed Miller, former editor of the *Harvard Education Letter*, says the existing research testifying to technology's classroom value is "just worthless. So flawed it shouldn't even be called research." Computers encourage a fundamental shift in sociability and values, just as television did before them. They teach that exploring two-dimensional electronic frames is more critical than engaging in conversation, exploration and risk-taking. Anyone in his right mind should be worried about a technological takeover of schooling The highly discouraging record of student and teacher performance with computers is being deliberately concealed.

Do I have an answer? I don't, but the legendary William James, who did as much as any man to produce the absurd comedy of modern Heraclitean life, does. It comes in the form of a self-repudiation he made after looking back on his perfectly successful life. James wrote:

> I am done with great things and big plans, great institutions and big success. I am for those tiny invisible loving human forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies like so many rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, which, if given time, will rend the hardest monuments of human pride.

I think history will impose this Thalean solution soon whether we like it or not. When that happens, instead of grieving we should celebrate.

And that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

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Orin Domenico teaches high school in Utica, New York. He also has an article entitled "Digging in the Ground," in the winter issue of the Journal of Family Life. *We hope he'll send us many more!*

REVISIONING DISCIPLINE

by Orin Domenico

Our local high school, the one my son goes to, has been featured prominently in our local newspaper, with front page stories, three times during this past school year. The first time was over reports that fighting and the threat of violence were out of hand at the school and that many students were afraid to be there. These reports turned out to be wildly exaggerated, but I guess that calm and boredom don't sell as well as violence and fear, so the contradictory reports made only the editorial page in the form of letters from students.

The second major splash came over a controversy about the alternative high school that was being set up for students whose behavior was proving too difficult to deal with in the traditional high school setting. The black community was concerned that an inordinate number of minority students were slated to be placed in this alternative program, which, like the high school itself, would be staffed overwhelmingly by whites. Would the alternative school serve only as a holding tank to get "troublemakers" out of the way?

The racial angle was at the heart of the third story as well. A series of recent articles dealt with our school system's rising suspension rate and the fact that those who were suspended from school again tended to be disproportionately from minority groups. The school officials maintained that the system was colorblind and that they reluctantly used suspension as a last ditch answer to dealing with students of all races who could not adjust to the structures of school, recognizing fully that it didn't do much for the problem student, but that it did keep them from disrupting the education of the majority who wanted to learn.

What these three stories have in common, beyond the racial angle (which was a tacit element in the first story), is that they all were about problems with school discipline. Discipline, it seems, is displacing falling test scores as the number one educational concern. A recent poll of teachers, by my own state teacher's union (NYSUT), found that discipline was also the number one educational concern among teachers. Many teachers reported that they felt unsafe in their schools and that they now routinely ignore many instances of unacceptable student behavior, such as swearing, insubordination and fighting because it is often more trouble to report them than not.

The public perception is certainly that rampant discipline problems are at the heart of our educational dilemma. When new acquaintances learn that I am a high school teacher, their first comment or question typically concerns discipline. "I don't think I could stand teaching in a public school today with the kids running wild." Further, it seems that most people believe that the answer to the problem lies in re-empowering teachers and administrators with the means of dealing forcibly with the perpetrators. The problems, we like to believe, began when teachers lost the right to inflict corporal punishment. The models of the principal carrying the baseball bat, the tough drill sergeant, and the even tougher Mother Superior loom large in the American imagination. Stories abound of the good old days when some coach, principal, or teacher picked up a student with one hand by the collar and slammed him up against the lockers. "I'll tell ya, that boy didn't mouth off again!"

To be fair, there are many voices in the debate who are suggesting more liberal solutions, who believe that the kids need more understanding, structure, and caring guidance. These voices call on the school to fill a larger and larger role as our families and communities continue to decline. They want teachers to be social workers, therapists, and surrogate parents, as well as educators. So we add Life 101, Childcare, and Domestic Survival Skills to an already overpacked curriculum. What I am *not* hearing, in the great debate over what is to be done, are any new ideas, and quite frankly I don't think any of the old ones are going to work, not if we want anything beyond the maintenance of order. But, that raises an interesting question: what is it that we really want to happen? Is it true, as the administrators suggest, that we want to maintain order so that education can happen? What I never saw in the articles in our local paper, or from parents, teachers, psychologists, social workers or administrators, was any questioning of the basic assumptions that inform the debate over school discipline.

What I want to suggest is that most of the discussion I am hearing concerning discipline is starting with two very flawed assumptions. The first is that schools exist primarily as sites for academic education—the learning of reading, writing, and arithmetic. I believe, rather, as John Taylor Gatto, New York State Teacher of the Year, and others suggest, that compulsory public schooling has a "hidden curriculum"—the teaching of blind obedience to authority—that supersedes any academic mission.

> ***When I entered high school in 1964, my curiosity and creativity were still alive, despite three stifling years of junior high, but it was becoming more and more difficult to connect my desire to learn to what went on in school.***

Before going further you might find it helpful to honestly consider the following questions. What did you learn in public school (particularly the last six years of it) that you are still using today? What did you learn there that has carried over into your work life? I know that for myself, by the end of sixth grade I possessed all the basic skills that are required for continuing self-education. I had a near perfect record in elementary school and left sixth grade a bright lad who loved to read, draw, write poetry, and learn. When I entered high school in 1964, my curiosity and creativity were still alive, despite three stifling years of junior high, but it was becoming more and more difficult to connect my desire to learn to what went on in school. After a sterling start (a 98 average in the first quarter) my marks dropped precipitously.

During my junior year I began to miss a lot of school and was eventually suspended for a week due to repeated truancy. Eventually, I dropped out during my senior year, a lost soul with no vision of a future for myself as an adult in the world. Of course there were extenuating circumstances. My family life was a deepening mess and the post-Kennedy turmoil of the mid-sixties was in full swing. Rebellion and marijuana smoke were in the air. My parents blame the times, and I have always blamed myself for my downfall, but now that I've spent seven years back in high school, teaching, I wonder about the school's role in my debacle.

I now can recall so little of the academic life of high school. The memories that linger strongest are of the heated debates I set off in my public speaking class when I gave impassioned talks against the Vietnam War and, after reading Bertrand Russell, on why I now considered myself to be an agnostic. I remember also, from those days, how, after reading a review in *The New Republic,* I worked my way through all of the early novels of Kurt Vonnegut. I still read voraciously and despite my mediocre performance in English class got one of the highest verbal SAT scores in my large high school. My ancient and venerated English teacher, Mrs. Bates, would rail at the other students who didn't read on their own like "Mister" Domenico. I bring these things up, not to ring my own bell but to question why my obviously active mind and imagination were not embraced by the school or why I, eager to learn, did not embrace it.

We who love learning know that although it involves a certain discipline, it is pleasurable activity. What is more joyful than a new insight, or more exciting than discovering (uncovering) a connection? What is more rewarding than the generating and expressing of one's own ideas? Why then is the high school one of the most joyless, most hated places on earth? (The Simpsons' creator, Matt Groening, in his book *School is Hell,* calls high school, "the 2nd deepest pit in hell," junior high being the deepest.) I personally hated high school with a passion, did the minimum of work, and skipped classes, whole days or weeks whenever I could.

At the same time, I read, had numerous intellectual interests, and loved ideas. I always figured something was wrong with me for being unable to successfully adapt to school, but the more I see of students adapting, the more I question the value of this "success." During the school year I daily hear students complaining about the boredom, the meaninglessness, and joylessness of the place where they are forced to spend their days. Far too many of them sink into a stupor that doesn't lift until 2:47, when the last bell rings. Even the amazing few who are still motivated by a genuine desire to learn wonder aloud, "Why does this place have to be this bad?"

I believe that high school students hate school not because they don't want to learn but because they *do* want to learn. They despise school precisely because they want so much from it and get so little. Contrary to the notion that education is wasted on the young, I believe that adolescence is an ideal time for learning. Those who hold that teen "hormones running wild" are an impediment to education forget that this powerful awakening to sexuality is also an opening to God, to the mystery of life and to the soul. That opening in her sixteen-year-old heroine Janie is beautifully evoked by Zora Neale Hurston in her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

> It was a spring afternoon in West Florida. Janie had spent most of the day under a blossoming pear tree in the backyard. She had been spending every minute that she could steal from her chores under that tree for the last three days. That was to say, ever since the first tiny blossom had opened. It had called her to come and gaze on mystery. From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from the leaf-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. It stirred her tremendously. How? Why? It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again. What? How? Why? This singing she heard that had nothing to do with her ears. The rose of the world was breathing out smell. It followed her through all her waking moments and caressed her in her sleep. It connected itself with other vaguely felt matters that had struck her outside observation and buried themselves in her flesh. Now they emerged and quested about her consciousness. (10)

Our students are subject to these same yearnings, and they are also called "to come and gaze upon mystery." But our schools insist on being places of intellect only, where mysteries are to be solved rather than gazed upon. The Sufi poet Rumi tells us, "Mysteries are not to be solved. The eye goes blind when it only wants to see why." (Bly, Rag, 371)

Does school have to be the chores they steal away from, rather than the pear tree they lie under?

Do we remember the dangerous, bittersweet power of our own adolescent yearning? Are we afraid of that power? Do we, like Janie's Granny, with the best intentions, act on that fear, and call the youth in from that first embrace with life and marry them off quickly to a safe prospect? Does school have to be the chores they steal away from, rather than the pear tree they lie under?

My own case was not an anomaly. Adolescence is a time of questioning, an explosive opening up to sex, to God, to life. Now that I've had the opportunity to observe closely I see that school, instead of harnessing this great energy, seeks to suppress it. The desire to learn is natural, and kids want to know about everything, but the primary lessons taught in school today are the same ones that I learned there. These are lessons that translate all too well to the world of work:

1) to tolerate massive amounts of boredom (preferably without complaint);
2) to disregard my own likes and desires;
3) to allow my life to be regulated by a clock and bells over which I have no control and which arbitrarily regulate my day and what I am to be doing at any given time;
4) to be constantly busy and to expect no time for reflection about what I am doing;
5) to defer judgment on all issues of importance to experts and to mistrust my own experience;
6) to accept constant surveillance and complete lack of privacy;
7) to be in constant competition with my peers for approval from the authorities;
8) to accept the shallow evaluation of my work and myself by people in authority who obviously have little knowledge of either; and
9) to have little or no say in the important decisions that are made by an impersonal institution that is controlling my life.

Now remember, I am speaking for myself here; in your high school you may have learned to follow your bliss, to think critically, to be independent, to work cooperatively with others, and to value your feelings, your thoughts, and your self, but I doubt it. I have taught high school now for eight years and the lessons I teach are the same ones I learned. Moreover, today's students seem to learn another lesson as well—that it's okay to cheat; for they see clearly that the ends (grades) are all that really matters.

I know that this is a pretty tough list to swallow. I am not saying that nothing else goes on in school, that kids don't occasionally discover that they love to read or write or draw or play music, but these loves are more often discovered outside of school, and school more often serves to quash any existing enthusiasms. If your own memory doesn't serve you well or doesn't jibe at all with what I'm saying, try talking to some of today's students. See if they don't agree with what I'm saying. I find that even my "best" students are increasingly cynical about the school and their own accomplishments in it.

If you are a teacher and aren't buying what I say, I ask you to think seriously about how you have been evaluated during your career. Does anyone ever carefully consider the intellectual impact you are having upon your students, look closely at your continuing classroom practices and their real results, or regularly discuss with you your educational philosophies? (I know you are observed every year, but does anything change?) What are the things that you can do wrong that make waves or rock the boat, the things you can count on hearing about? Aren't the infractions that matter things like not having your grades or plan book in on time? Isn't it true that if most of your students pass your course, regardless of what they have actually learned, you won't get in trouble? At the end of the year when you close up shop, what is required of you? Bundle the exams, count the books, get in the grades, turn in the keys—right? Does anyone require that you reflect and write on the year's teaching, on what the students and you actually learned, on how things might be improved? What is *really* more important in this business—covering your ass or teaching? Think of the pre-tenure teachers you know who have not had their contracts renewed. Was it because they failed to teach well? (If that were the case, how many teachers would ever get tenure?) Or, was it because they had trouble keeping the kids quiet and in their seats?

All he got out of this man, noted for his dedication to building a solid academic program, was, "You kept them in their seats."

I had a good friend, a serious English teacher, a guy who really tried to be innovative in his teaching, who gave it up in frustration after eight years. During his last week on the job he sat down with his principal, by all reports a good guy and an effective administrator, and asked him for his candid evaluation of his teaching. All he got out of this man, noted for his dedication to building a solid academic program, was, "You kept them in their seats." If you are honest with yourself about our profession, I think the bottom line is clearly control. What gets discussed more often in teacher's meetings: Academics? Students as learners? Or rules enforcement and students as problems?

Of course, admitting all this calls for a major dose of unblinking honesty, a willingness to see what we see and hear what we hear. We can joke about this stuff in private but to speak of it openly constitutes treason, for such knowledge is a threat to our own security within the system. So when one does speak out about one's real experience it is not unlike a family member in an alcoholic or abusive family breaking the family silence. In alcoholism recovery groups it is said that when a family is in denial about the alcoholic in its midst, it is like having an elephant in the middle of the living room that everyone pretends not to see. When a family member finds the courage to point out the "elephant," the parents and other siblings quickly gather around asking, "What elephant?" Likewise, when a family member breaks the silence on abuse, physical or sexual, he or she is apt to be confronted with statements like these: "I was there all these years. Wouldn't I know if abuse was going on? Dad was a bit distant and angry now and then, but he had a hard job; you know what it's like." In the short run, denial is a lot less painful than honesty. I now find it easier to admit that our business is control and to start from there to heal it. Which brings us back to the second flawed assumption in the discipline debate, one that must be unmasked before the healing can begin.

> ***...sitting quietly, listening to someone else talk is a very ineffective learning strategy. We all learn best when we are talking, doing, experimenting, actively problem-solving in the real world.***

The second assumption at the heart of the debate over discipline is that students learn best when they are quietly seated in rows at their desks. A letter in our newspaper in response to the suspension series states this assumption clearly. "In order to get an education, a student in any grade level must sit down, shut up, pay attention and work." The truth is that sitting quietly, listening to someone else talk is a very ineffective learning strategy. We all learn best when we are talking, doing, experimenting, actively problem-solving in the real world.

Teachers know this—or they should—since they have read educational philosophy and have seen the research on learning as part of their training. And even if they slept through their education courses (in many cases a good choice), they couldn't miss the news about active learning that constantly confronts them in all the school reform buzz that comes down to us from State Ed. and a thousand other well-intentioned sources. Most of the curriculum reforms currently being proposed—collaborative learning, portfolio and performance assessment, etc.—recognize the need for a more interactive classroom, and for more active engagement of students in the learning process, so how come nothing ever seems to change?

The liberal educational institutions speak the language of reform very well but resist any substantive change in their practice, for to reform the schools along lines that would make them truly places of learning would be to eliminate the need for most of the people who are employed in education...

Stick your head in the door of classrooms all over the country and you are still apt to see someone droning away at the front of the room to an audience slumped down in their seats with glazed expressions, their inner clocks ticking away the seconds until the bell rings to free them from their stupor for a few minutes until they enter the next holding tank. The banking model of education[1] —the one that sees education as a teacher making deposits of information into the student's heads—persists through reform movement after reform movement. Why?

The liberal educational institutions speak the language of reform very well but resist any substantive change in their practice, for to reform the schools along lines that would make them truly places of learning would be to eliminate the need for most of the people who are employed in education, from the state commissioner down to the maintenance staff (and including most of the teachers). Also eliminated would be most of the textbooks, expensive equipment, and the profitable industries that provide them. The first mission of any "successful" institution is self-perpetuation. There are many jobs and lots of money at stake here, so even though the schools are clearly not working, we're not going to see any meaningful change soon if the decision-making remains in the hands of those with a vested interest in the status quo. The "keep-them-in-their-seats" (schooling) model of education is an industry, and the current discipline crisis is a convenient distraction from its failure. But looking at the discipline problem from a different angle (revisioning it) may provide some clues for new directions for education to take.

I am suggesting that the growing discipline problem in our schools is *not* simply a product of the disintegration of the social fabric and also that the discipline problem is *not* the underlying cause of the ineffectiveness of our schools. In fact, in both cases something nearly opposite may be true. John Gatto argues convincingly that compulsory schooling is a major factor in family and community disintegration.[2] Furthermore, I would argue that our ineffective model of education is a major cause of our discipline problem. Only the most hardened sociopaths would intentionally disrupt and sabotage any enterprise that treated them with respect, engaged them actively and clearly served their self-interest. We may have a few monsters that we are dealing with, but the vast majority of kids start out curious, wanting to learn, to grow up, to have purpose and meaning in their lives. A school that truly served their interests, that helped them to grow up, to find meaning, to connect to a community, would find them more than willing to learn. Such a school wouldn't need an assistant principal in charge of discipline or even much of a discipline policy at all.

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[1] See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1970.

II

In order to solve our discipline problem we might begin by turning to another meaning and other connotations of the word "discipline." "Discipline" and its root word "disciple" both come to us through Old French and have their roots in the Latin noun *discipulus*, itself from the verb *discere*, to learn, and from the Late Latin verb *disciplinare*, to teach or train. In our English dictionary today the primary definitions of discipline focus on its more military connotations—"training to act in accordance with rules," and "instruction and exercise to train to proper conduct or action." These definitions are well suited to the model of school as training in obedience that I discussed above.

The proponents of this military notion of discipline for schools would say that control and order are necessary for education to take place, and they are right. But doesn't military training demand a particular type of discipline? For a fighting force to be effective, independence, imagination, and critical thinking have to be reduced to a minimum. Soldiers have to follow orders quickly, wholeheartedly, and without hesitation. They have to disregard personal interest for the sake of the greater good of the army and of the cause they serve. Hence, they are drilled to compliance, with harsh penalties for all disobedience.

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[2] See John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down, The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Education.* Philadelphia: New Society, 1992.

Even this sort of discipline has its limits of effectiveness since the best armies are those whose soldiers voluntarily submit to severe discipline out of belief or faith in a greater cause. This type of discipline does not work very well when that belief or faith is suspended. The threat of violence or even of death will only control people for so long. People will find ways to thwart the will of the controllers even where out-and-out rebellion seems futile. However, resistance can be a complex matter, for effective controllers learn to obfuscate their willed intentions so that the resistance of the controlled plays right into their hands.

What would our economy, as it exists, do with millions of free-thinking people who demanded meaningful work and purposeful lives instead of tedium, television, and trinkets? A truly educated generation (one educated to its own humanity) would bring about an immediate overthrow of our entire social-political-economic order.

For instance, the public school system maintains the illusion that its primary intention is the education of students to become free-willed, independent, critical-thinking adult citizens of a democracy, a process that the kids seem to be resisting like crazy. I participate regularly in discussions on how our students are unmotivated, on how they resist learning. I regularly hear the teacher's questioning lament, "I'm supposed to motivate these kids?" The true answer is no. What would our economy, as it exists, do with millions of free-thinking people who demanded meaningful work and purposeful lives instead of tedium, television and trinkets? A truly educated generation (one educated to its own humanity) would bring about an immediate overthrow of our entire social-political-economic order. The students' resistance to education in the compulsory public school is not really a problem if the school's real mission is to train children to be drones, who will willingly hand over the control of their lives to others. The grand flapdoodle over discipline is simply part of the endless crisis dance of a failed moribund institution. As long as the dance keeps going we'll have the profitable school industry but no effective education.

In order to find a model of discipline for effective education we need to turn away from the military model. In the dictionary, far down the list of definitions of discipline we find this one: "a branch of instruction or learning, for instance, the disciplines of history or economics" In order to become an adherent of a particular discipline of learning, in the old model of education, a person became a student or disciple of a learned practitioner or mentor in that discipline. (The corrupted remnants of the mentor system are found in our graduate schools today, where one works with an advisor who supervises master or doctoral work.) The connotations of this form of discipline are far different from those of the military model. We might begin looking at the differences by looking at the most well-known example of discipleship in the Western tradition.

The first entry under "disciple" in the dictionary refers to Christ's followers during his lifetime, particularly the twelve apostles. What are the parameters of Christ's model of educational discipline? First, attendance wasn't mandatory for everyone. Christ didn't set up the Judea compulsory school system. He merely issued an invitation, "Follow me." Those who were inclined followed; those who weren't didn't. So the first characteristic of this model is *calling*. Those who pursue the discipline do so out of desire, by their own volition; they are "called" to it by an inner voice, a voice that we never give our students enough solitude to possibly hear.

The second characteristic of this model of discipleship is *commitment*. Following Jesus was not an easy path; you couldn't enter it in a half-hearted manner. You couldn't be both a tax collector or fisherman and a follower of Christ. You had to drop everything else and follow. Monetary gain was never a consideration, but love, on the other hand, was a necessary element of one's calling in order for there to be the depth of commitment that could lead one to walk across deserts, sleep in the wilds, fraternize with the lowlife of society, and suffer the scorn of public opinion.

Our present system of education turns us so thoroughly against our own desires and experience that we don't need deserts or public scorn, our own inner resistance to finding and doing our own work is often enough to stop us. At a recent workshop in New York, poet Robert Bly spoke of how young people today get stuck at the level of fantasy in relation to their desires. He said that you meet twenty-two-year-olds who think they are going to become great poets in a year or two. In the old Celtic tradition, he said, if you wanted to become a poet, they had you learn thirty-two meters and memorize five thousand lines of poetry before a mentor would even talk to you. By then you had learned something about discipline.

The third characteristic of Christ's model of discipleship is that the disciple had to think for himself and draw his own conclusions from his own experience. Christ didn't give lectures or handouts. He taught by example (his own practice) and through parables that were open to interpretation. Personally, I doubt that he intended to start a school or institutional religion, for institutions invariably corrupt ideas, regiment thinking, and tend toward that control model of discipline. His followers started the church, not Christ.

Finally, Christ's model of discipline requires a master to follow. The master must be one who has himself submitted to the discipline and who still practices it. Christ didn't say, " You guys stay here in the desert and fast for a month; I'll be over at the Ramada, you can find me in the bar if you need help." He did not begin his public life until he was himself a rabbi, one fully versed in his tradition.

Our students need desperately to be with themselves on a quest, to experience solitude, to know what it is to have one's deepest desires come up against obstacles both within and without, for only by testing ourselves...do we find out who we really are.

One way out of our educational dilemma might be a return to the ideas of the disciplines and of discipleship in education. This process might begin at the age where we currently send kids to junior high school. During early adolescence, students, particularly those without a clear sense of calling, might have a series of apprenticeships. As the calling, or vocation (from the Latin *vocatio,* meaning a summons or calling, derived from the verb *vocare,* to call) became clear, a more formal relationship to a mentor could be formed. Remember that mentorship involves mostly self-education. Our students need desperately to be with themselves on a quest, to experience solitude, to know what it is to have one's deepest desires come up against obstacles both within and without, for only by testing ourselves, and coming up against our private demons, by failing and trying again do we find out who we really are. As it is, we drown our students in assigned tasks, forced association, and constant surveillance, so that they never experience the solitude and reflection so necessary to growth.

Desire-driven self-education can include student/mentor relationships with people that one doesn't know or even with those who are dead. For instance, a poet might take Yeats as mentor through close study of Yeats' work and life and by consciously trying to imitate and emulate his work. Richard Wright, in his autobiography *Black Boy*, tells how he took H. L. Mencken as a mentor by illegally obtaining his books from segregated Southern libraries and of how Mencken taught him that one could use words as weapons. Quentin Tarentino, the heralded young writer and director of *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, is a high school dropout, who never went to film school. Tarentino worked for many years in a large video store which gave him access to thousands of films. He studied films from every period, genre, and nation, and he read criticism. He then spent two years and all the money he could scrape together making a sixteen millimeter film. When he could finally afford to begin developing and viewing his work, he discovered that most of it, all but the last, was awful, but he had no regrets for he had taught himself his trade and "it was cheaper than film school." Tarentino went on to write three scripts before he got to direct one himself. He recommends the same self-training to anyone who wants to learn film making. Tarentino's mentors were Howard Hawks, Martin Scorcese, Brian DePalma, Pauline Kael, and the other directors and critics he admired and studied. Admiration and emulation are great teachers.

We have convinced ourselves that we need a professional class of teachers, when our own history should convince us that nothing could be farther from the truth. Education has suffered greatly in the hands of professional teachers. Anyone who has a skill to teach and a willingness to share their knowledge should be able to do so. I am not suggesting the abolition of the classroom; there are some things that can be taught well there, but classroom time should always be very limited and lecture time more limited still. The real learning almost always takes place in the real world in real practice of one's craft or art.

It has not been my purpose here to offer a carefully worked-out plan. Once we have abandoned the outdated factory/caretaker model of the school day, we open the possibility of endless combinations of classroom, individual, and apprenticeship education. The details, the "how to," are never as important as the ideas and visions that guide us. The important idea here is that we remove education from the realms of compulsion and coercion and put it into the realms of eros and desire. I begin with the assumptions that we all instinctively love to learn, and that everyone longs to find his or her own work, that we each have what psychologist James Hillman calls a work "instinct."

> The fault here, the problem here, is imagining the hands as mindless, as only physical. That's where the whole problem of work begins: right there in undervaluing and misapprehending the hands. Then work has to become an "ethic": you have to tell yourself to work, discipline children to work, reward people for their work. We moralize work and make it a problem, forgetting that the hands love to work and that in the hands is the mind. That "work ethic" idea does more to impede working...it makes it a duty instead of a pleasure. We need to talk of the work instinct, not the work ethic....

The Puritan work ethic pervades American education. We begin with the assumption that we must discipline the students to learn. When they rebel, when they ask, "Why do I have to learn this stuff?," we consider it sufficient to tell them that they have to learn what they're told to learn because it has been required by experts who know what they need to learn. We offer rewards: "Do you want a good job when you grow up? Do you want to be a well-rounded person?"

The coercive model of education "worked" in this country as long as people were willing to submit to a rigid and unfulfilling model of adult responsibility, but that model cracked and broke during the second half of the twentieth century, and we will never get it back together again. Now that we can no longer guarantee the rewards of the middle class American dream or of a better life for one's children to everyone willing to submit, it is becoming increasingly difficult to control people in the coercive school. Drugs and mass electronic entertainment (along with poor education) are helping to keep the students passive, but their restlessness and resistance is growing, and soon we will have to implement draconian repressive measures or turn towards real freedom.

I can see how some people reading this might believe that the freedom I am suggesting would lead toward very narrow educational pathways: "I want to be a rock guitarist so all I want to study is guitar." Over the short run this might be true, but in the long run, desire-driven education would move away from narrow specialization. Narrow specialization, the doing of just one thing, over and over again is a product of, and serves, narrowly-defined economic, not human, interests. When education is humanized, erotic, desire-driven it opens up, unfolds, branches rather than narrows down. In his or her pursuit of excellence the rock guitarist, for example, might well be led to the study of the music of other cultures, of music history, of music theory, of religion, of electronic technology, of literature, even mathematics. Freedom to pursue one's own education would lead to more Renaissance persons and fewer specialists.

Now we have people who never write (or even seriously read) teaching English, people who never paint or sculpt teaching art, people who never solve real problems teaching math, and people who never do research teaching science.

When one becomes a disciple, answers a call with one's life, then the issue of discipline as control becomes an entirely personal issue. If it is your desire to become a practitioner in your chosen field, to know your stuff, then you submit to the discipline. Your mentors are themselves examples of this submission or they wouldn't be mentors. For the truth is that one cannot teach a discipline unless one practices it. Throughout history, until the advent of the professional teacher, if one wanted to learn something one went to one who practiced it. Now we have people who never write (or even seriously read) teaching English, people who never paint or sculpt teaching art, people who never solve real problems teaching math, and people who never do research teaching science. This list could go on and on. In fact the only discipline that many teachers submit to is the one of getting up each day and obediently going to work at a job they don't particularly like, so tell me, what is it that they are qualified to teach?

If we have a difficult time picturing the adolescents we know submitting to this type of discipline, and seriously taking up apprenticeships in the real world, I submit that it is because our current model encourages immaturity. In societies all over the world adolescents in the age group twelve to nineteen begin to take on adult responsibilities. It was not that many years ago in our country that the same was true. Ben Franklin was running his own brewery at the age of thirteen. I am not suggesting that we return to the cruel world of child labor in mines and factories, but rather, that if we want to truly educate kids to be independent, clear thinking adults, we begin to make adolescent education part of a larger initiation process into real adulthood. As it is, our society is dying for a lack of adults as we continue in a coercive, compulsory educational process that produces resentful perpetual adolescents.

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FREE PERIOD

With delicate FM piano lingering
In shimmering fluorescent air.
I sit facing a room of empty desks,
Assorted, dilapidated, dingy, plastic, cheap,
They stare back, crooked rows,
Pink, green, butterscotch, battered brown.

Across the room, paint peeling,
Smudged windows dividing the space
Between pedagogy and the real, misty
Gray world out there.
World of October drizzle, cool dismal, and free.

Here the desks are held prisoner.
The books are indentured servants.
The floors support us reluctantly.
The drop ceiling is bored with holding itself up.
Nothing is here by choice.

The papers strewn across my desk
Want to run away.
My first period lecture
Unhindered by student ears
Wanders freely through the autumn brown
    woods on yonder hill.

This brick shit barn, a poor container
For life—mine and theirs.
Thoughts, dreams, fantasies, reflections,

Adolescent angst, amorousness, and
Old man lust all press against the
Dishwater dull walls, wanting only
To be wanted, to adhere to life,
To wind their erotic tendrils, seductively
Around the waist of that wanton world,
To pull it closer, to embrace.

But stuck inside this hippo-hide rubber called school,
Practicing safe education,
Safe from the disease of the hunt,
Minds fallen flaccid,
Souls deflated,
Cock and balls exchanged for clock and bells,
We wither and waste time
Injuring all our eternities.

O. Domenico, 10/96

> If you imagine someone who is brave enough to withdraw all his projections, then you get an individual who is conscious of a pretty thick shadow. Such a man has saddled himself with new problems and conflicts. He has become a serious problem to himself, as he is now unable to say that *they* do this or that, *they* are wrong, and *they* must be fought against. He lives in the "House of the Gathering." Such a man knows that whatever is wrong in the world. if he only learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day. (p. 243)
>
> —C. G. Jung, "House of the Gathering"

CELEBRATING THE DIFFERENCE: FOR PARTIAL VISION IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

by John Potter

Kobe, Japan

Most alternative educators have their own ideas which are different from the ideas of other alternative educators. Some of these ideas may overlap and some of them won't but none of them is an all-embracing vision. There is nothing wrong in this so-called 'partial vision'—the term used by Ron Miller in his recent article in *ΣΚΟΛΕ*. If one educator embraced all the ideas possible, then it is most likely that a school based on all these things would be no more than a big compromise, a contradiction or an unsatisfactory coalition. I will choose an example close to my home. In Japanese politics, there is at present a coalition government of major forces with no real opposition except for the Japanese Communist Party. These politicians have all got together in a weak compromise which is vaguely capitalist but nothing else—it has no strong ideas about how to run the country in any particular way. It is holistic politics, if you like, but only the communists who oppose them seem to have any real ideas. I hesitate to use the word ideology, which has had an understandably bad press, but without something like it you can be left with a messy, directionless beast.

In many cases it might be better if these "partial visionaries" in alternative education were to follow their own individual (partial) philosophies when translating their ideas into action. At least the prospective student or parent then would have a real alternative from which to choose. And the individual could be free to choose which vision he or she liked best.

To follow a holistic approach in a general way has some benefits but in many specific or fundamental matters a 'holistic' approach, as I understand the term, sounds rather like a woolly compromise. This may be fine for some people—especially for those who are less concerned about looking for a specific kind of educational philosophy in practice—but it will not suit everyone and probably wouldn't suit me.

By "general" I am talking about those common things which may be found in many alternative schools and which are generally associated with most kinds of alternative education. For example, I would suggest that the term 'alternative education' generally presumes a dissatisfaction with established systems of education and that alternative schools exhibit a greater degree of freedom than that usually found in the establishment school as well as much friendlier relationships between adults and children.

So far so good. By specific or fundamental, though, I am referring to basic underlying ideas or ideologies in alternative education which may be opposed and which would be difficult to put together. As I am most of all familiar with Summerhill and the ideas of A.S. Neill I will use one or two examples from his writings to illustrate this difficulty. Although usually lumped together as alternative educators, Neill was in fact quite opposed to both Montessori and Steiner. He felt that Montessori placed too little importance on the child's fantasy life and was obsessed instead with learning and intellectual development. But most of all he objected to her subtle guidance of children. He regarded her as a religious woman with definite ideas of right and wrong which were to be subtly inculcated into the child. Neill felt that the child should have the right to challenge adult morality. Similarly he objected to Steiner, because of his disapproval of self-government for children, his spirituality and molding of the child. The Steiner method was much too specific in the kind of person it aimed to develop, Neill says:

> Steiner guides children. I don't try to. I don't know where they are going... I believe that a child does not require to be led; that left to himself he will evolve a social and personal conscience for himself. (quoted in *Croall*, p.153).

On the not insignificant topic of religion Neill opposed the teaching of Christianity in the same way that he was also against the teaching of Humanism or any other 'ism', which he saw as molding. He said he was indifferent to spirituality and was, in addition, an atheist:

> To postulate a god who was the architect of the grand design seems to me pure childish superstition. Even if we call god cosmic energy we are not solving anything.
> —*The New Summerhill* (p. 124).

It is obvious then that at Neill's school the "Summerhill child" is one who must be trusted to grow naturally to be good—there is and never was, according to Neill, any such thing as original sin. There must be no molding and no guidance unless asked for by the child. Certainly no teaching of morality. To include religious instruction or compulsory lessons or learning with Montessorian apparatus at Summerhill would have been unthinkable and Neillians would be quite right in saying that it had become a watered-down Summerhill if such things were to pass or if any of their own fundamental beliefs were to be swept away. Others of different persuasions and with a different basic ideology could justifiably argue the same way if ideas contrary to their own philosophies were introduced to their schools.

Therefore there are certain specific or fundamental ideas that are perhaps inevitably destined to follow paths separate from some other beliefs in education. These differences are too important and too far apart to be reconciled. However, alternative education embraces a wide field and has a dazzling array of possibilities. What is needed most, I believe, is the continued and increased proliferation of these choices rather than their amalgamation into watered-down coalitions.

This does not mean that we must blindly follow our educational heroes and mentors while disregarding all others. To return to Japan, for example, the educationalist Shinichiro Hori wanted to make a school there like Summerhill. Thus, in 1992, his Kinokuni Children's Village was opened for the first time in Wakayama. Although a strong advocate of Neill and Summerhill (he has also recently translated five of Neill's books into Japanese) Hori has not simply followed everything that Neill did. A critic of what Neill would call 'the learning side' at Summerhill, he felt that he could improve on this at Kinokuni by introducing the ideas of learning by doing advocated by John Dewey. And so, Kinokuni is to some extent a combination of the ideas of Neill and Dewey. As Hori has written:

> When one can free himself from the fixed idea that to pursue Summerhill ideas he must do just as Neill did, he must feel released and wish to do his best not only to try anything possible in any difficult situation but to create his own ways, given hints and encouragement from Neill and other educationists as well. (Hori, 1-82)

At Kinokuni, Neillian freedom and self-government has been blended with Dewey's project work. A mix of emotional freedom and intellectual freedom. At first glance this might seem a contradiction. Neill has little in common with what he called 'classroom theorists' and has expressed his impatience with them and indeed with Dewey himself in his fictionalized early work, *A Dominie Dismissed*. Neill thought that emotional growth was the only sort that really mattered, and that all growth occurs naturally anyway. Dewey, concerned only with intellectual growth, saw it occurring only when the appropriate experiences are provided and not naturally, as Neill would have it. Despite these apparently irreconcilable differences in outlook there are some features of both Neill and Dewey's philosophy which indicate that they might make more successful partners than Neill and Montessori, or Neill and Steiner. Dewey, like Neill, does not specify a fixed end to which children must be directed or guided, however gently. With both, the need for children to choose themselves and to make their own educational aims is paramount. Any aims there are should be very near with an immediate end in view. And the attainment of growth is not so important as the growing in the here and now. In this respect, Neill, despite his obstinacy regarding 'learning,' would not be fundamentally in disagreement with Dewey. In formulating the philosophy for Kinokuni, Hori also insists that Neill's stress on the need for happiness to come first is also not at odds with Deweyan ideas of learning. For Hori, the happiness of a child is an indication that the child is growing: happiness is seen as a sign of this process.

The resultant blend at Kinokuni of Neill + Dewey + Hori is not necessarily viewed by Hori as being 'holistic'. Hori has worked out tenets of his own for the development of 'the free child at Kinokuni'. The three components making up what he calls 'the free child' are emotional freedom, intellectual freedom, and social freedom. The implementation of this plan for the free child takes place through daily life at the school, which incorporates the Neillian ideas of voluntary lessons and self-government with the development of free intellect, largely through daily work which is organized in the form of projects. Because Neill had no real interest in what he called the learning side, it is quite possible to include these Deweyan elements without compromising the fundamental beliefs of Neill. However, to tack on large bits of Montessori or Steiner would be difficult, if not impossible, as much would be basically at odds with Hori's (and Neill's) vision. Hori also has no interest in the religious or mystical or spiritual side and does not believe that any of these elements should be introduced to the school. And so here we have another kind of 'partial vision' of alternative education which is following its own path in Japan, so far very successfully.

In choosing to send my own son to Kinokuni Children's Village, the main consideration, of course, is whether he is happy there. As a self-proclaimed 'modified model' of Summerhill School, Kinokuni also offers to me, in its main principles, the kind of education with which I am most comfortable: a free environment in which children decide things for themselves and follow their own interests without rewards or punishments, and with no religious or moral indoctrination. In some smaller details I might be less content. For example, I might wish for more rapid progress towards a more complete system of self-government, or, say, the opportunity for children to choose a vegetarian menu. But these are small scale issues when set beside the school's basic philosophy with which I am in agreement and which is not to be compromised .

It is true that there is no one method or kind of education which is best or which will suit everyone. I think that there is a need for the many methods presented by different kinds of alternative educators, and the projects which spring from them, to be better understood. They often need to be more clearly defined in order to avoid misunderstanding or misrepresentation and to allow people to make informed choices. Some of the schools (or homeschools, non-schools?) which exist may be able to collaborate or borrow ideas from each other in some way, as Neill and Dewey's ideas exist together at Kinokuni. However, where basic ideas are so different as to preclude this, there is nothing wrong in following a quite separate path, which may indeed be preferable. The wide acceptance and alliance of multiple ideas in the name of holistic education could itself be described as a partial vision and is essentially no better or worse than any other model. This does not mean that a variety of ideas cannot co-exist alongside each other as part of a great educational network. But there will be differences and, inevitably, a variety of separate paths to follow.

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The Treatment Philosophy Snowballs.

by Matt Hern

A couple of days ago I was digging around on my desk and happened to come across a news clipping that I had cut out and stashed away some time ago. It had run in my local newspaper via some wire service after originally appearing in the Calgary Herald. The article must be at least two years old; I'm unclear exactly when its from as the date I wrote on the corner is now obscured, but you'll have to take my word that I'm not making this up. You might suspect a hoax, because the story is so ludicrous. But really, it's apparently the truth. The headline reads:

Zoo polar bear put on Prozac to combat her neurotic pacing.

The story is this: the Calgary Zoo has a 24-year-old polar bear named Snowball who has been dosed with the anti-depressant Prozac as "therapy in a long-range plan for her neurotic behavior". The behavior in question is Snowball's obsessive pacing back and forth across her cage, an activity that once occupied up to 60% of her waking hours. The article quotes Dr. Bob Cooper, the zoo veterinarian, who says that "The sense is that maybe it's a psychological thing" and goes on to point out that since the bear has undergone a three-month treatment program, there has been a dramatic decrease in her pacing. To augment this approach, the zoo is also using what they call 'environmental enrichment' to help Snowball shake her neuroses. Zookeepers are hiding her food, or providing the fish encased in chunks of ice so she has to work a little harder for her food. There is also a team of researchers from the zoo, in conjunction with the University of Calgary psychology department, who are monitoring the bear and videotaping the results of this treatment. The article says that this "is believed to be one of the first major studies on the effects of Prozac on wild animals in captivity." Now, there are obviously layers and layers of ironic craziness here, conflated into one simple news story, and it is not really my intent to make public fun of a bunch of addled zookeepers in the Canadian prairie. I believe, however, that there are in fact several important points to be made here that this piece illustrates vividly, if somewhat bizarrely, and the relationship between the Calgary Zoo and dominant streams of contemporary educational thinking is critical to examine.

I want to argue here that when enigmatic character and non-standard responses to particular circumstance are identified as correctable deviances, whether through a school or a zoo, the door is opened for any and all treatment in the name of science and humanity. The practice of treating deviance in children and animals is the stock and trade of an enormous, and enormously growing, population of teachers, administrators, educational theorists, psychologists, researchers, child/animal psychologists, psychiatrists and pharmaceutical drug dealers, among many others. The situation at the Calgary Zoo may seem absurd, but I want to suggest to you that is hardly much different than what is happening in most schools today, and critically, it is the logical and reasonable extension of contemporary educational thinking.

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It is hardly a radical or complex analysis to suggest that the bear in the Calgary Zoo has likely gone insane after years of confinement and is so utterly bored that she paces endlessly of out desperation. Snowball is not neurotic: she has been reduced by brutal circumstances into unusual, repetitive behavior. Those in charge of the Calgary Zoo are clearly half-nuts themselves, and I'd like to think that most people can easily grasp the outrageous logic that describes a caged animal's pacing as pharmaceutically treatable neuroses.

If that is so, why then do so many parents allow their kids to be drugged in remarkably similar circumstances? And further, why do so many families allow their children to participate in the crudest and most ill-conceived behavior management techniques and crowd-control tactics legion's of professional school people can manufacture?

Back to Snowball for a moment. Consider that polar bears are the largest living land-based carnivores in the world. Average adult males are between 800-1000 pounds and 8-9 feet, females slightly smaller, while the largest bears can grow up to 1780 pounds. Polar bears are remarkable predators, surviving in brutal conditions, and ranging all across the Canadian, European and Asian arctic. Among their chief characteristics is their incredible travelling and hunting ability, not surprising given the barrenness of their landscapes. Although they are land-based animals, they are incredible swimmers, their Latin or scientific name *Ursus mar-*

itimus, meaning bear of the sea, and in the United States are protected under marine mammal legislation. Polar bears' primary food source are seals, with bears often leaping out of the water to trap them on ice flows, but they will also eat virtually any other food available, often travelling hundreds of miles to find sustenance.[1]

> At all times the ice bear is an inveterate and tireless traveller, both on land and in the sea. Hunters using aircraft have followed a bear across snow-covered ice for seventy miles without overtaking the bear. He has been found swimming as far as seventy-five or eighty miles from the nearest land, and now and then has been known to wander more than a hundred miles from saltwater, up a big river and its delta.[2]

When speaking about a polar bear we are speaking of an amazingly active animal, one that roams for hundreds of miles, swimming, running, digging, hunting and hibernating. It would be difficult to conceive of an animal less suited to confinement.

It can hardly be dogmatic hyperbole to suggest that Snowball is being subjected to cruel and unusual circumstances by her keepers. For a creature that naturally roams and swims for scores of miles, continual repetitive pacing must be a small bulwark against total insanity, a way to keep marginally active, a small way to answer the urge to move, a pain-relief strategy. And then, not only do swine like Dr. Bob Cooper have the audacity to torture the bear and call her pacing 'neurotic' and 'a psychological thing', they have to drug her with a powerful pharmaceutical in some kind of twisted experiment as well. Ugh.

Again, it can hardly be hyperbole to liken Snowball's situation to that of thousands of schoolkids. If polar bears are profoundly ill-suited to zoos, young children are no less ill-suited to classrooms. Like Snowball, kids everyday, in every city and every school in North America, are resorting to odd, enigmatic behaviors, often very similar to the bear's pacing, to cope with utterly inappropriate conditions. And like at the Calgary Zoo, schools are full of eager professionals ready to monitor, diagnose and treat these behaviours, armed with an ever-expanding arsenal of labels, diseases, conditions, therapies and drugs.

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[1] This info is culled from three books:

East, B., *Bears,* New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1977.
Koch, T.J., *The Year of the Polar Bear,* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975.
Hummel, M. and Sherry Pettigrew, *Wild Hunters,* Toronto: Key-Porter, 1991.

[2] East, B., *Bears.* p. 228.

Our schools are ludicrous environments, profoundly ill-suited to children's needs and desires. The idea that thirty children, all of the same age, will flourish if jammed together in sterile rooms for six hours a day, five days a week for twelve years of their natural youth being taught material that may only coincidentally be interesting to them is no more foolish than believing bears should be happy in cages. The attempt to force the school warehousing experiment to succeed has led to baroque constructions of pedagogical mechanisms designed to seduce, coerce or convince kids to stay, and when these fail, labels and treatments like ADD and ADHD are required.

For kids who stubbornly fail to fit school criteria for behavior and demeanor, there are always professionals like Dr. Bob at the Calgary Zoo, ready to offer analysis such as "the sense is that maybe it's a psychological thing." In startling increases, the treatment of choice is drug therapies, especially for children. The most popular drug this decade for school people has been Ritalin, and its use continues to rise dramatically with no signs that increase is preparing to plateau. In Canada, the use of Ritalin went up 36% last year, with a total user population of at least a quarter million, the vast majority of whom are children.[3] In the U.S. there are an estimated 1.5 million children on Ritalin, double the number since 1990, a figure representing 2.8% of all Americans under the age of 19.[4]

The use of Ritalin is almost exclusively used as a treatment for ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or ADHD (A.D. Hyperactivity Disorder), a specious series of classifications a swath of professionals have manufactured to describe antsy, wild, unfocused, uncooperative, odd, or scattered kids. The claim is that children are born with these disorders and the drugs give them at least a fighting chance to succeed, while many have disputed that this disorder exists at all. As Thomas Armstrong puts it:

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[3] *The Calgary Herald*, 'Ritalin Use in Canada up 36%—and Climbing', June 30th, 1997.

[4] http://www.azstarnet.com. *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, 09/10/97.

> ADD *does not exist;* these children are *not* disordered. They may have a different style of thinking, attending and behaving, but it's the broader social and educational influences that create the disorder, not the children. ...the best way of helping these kids is not by saddling them with a medical label and then applying a cautiously selected group of specialized treatments, but by providing them with the kinds of nurturing, stimulating and encouraging interventions that are good for all kids![5]

The real question is whether or not parents want their children to be aggressively and perhaps pharmaceutically molded to fit the school environment, or whether it is more appropriate to mold the circumstances and relationships to suit unique and enigmatic individuals.

While the claims of ADD and the use of Ritalin are outrageous, I want to make clear that this use of the drug is only the most obvious and odious aspect of a *treatment philosophy* itself. It is all too easy to target the drugging of small children as the essential wrong here. I want to urge you to consider that it is the entire cultural and pedagogical stance that names individual differences in behavior and demeanor as *correctable* that should be resisted. For over a century, school professionals have declared themselves the only arbiters of an essential canon of knowledges and have mandated themselves as the sole guardians of its dispensation. School people define the problems according to their own narrow scenarios, and then prescribe treatments as the only anwers. John McKnight has identified this pattern as common among professional service providers:

> In spite of the democratic pretence, the disabling function of unilateral professional help is the hidden assumption that "you will be better because I, the professional, know better." The professional implications of this assumption are central to anti-democratic systems.... Professionalized services communicate a worldview that defines our lives and our societies as a series of technical

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[5] Armstrong, T., *The Myth of the ADD Child*, New York: Dutton, 1995, p. xii.

> problems. This technical definition is masked by symbols of care and love that obscure the economic interests of the servicers and the disabling characteristics of their practices.[6]

This is the essential characteristic of the modern service-based economy: the disabling of citizens to solve their own personal and collective problems without the aid of outside professional help. Modern professionals have appropriated the power to define social problems, and their definitions always revolve around treatments, or the application of techniques upon a serviced population. Schools are the clearest and most damaging example of the treatment philosophy.

It is not just the drugging of small children and polar bears that should infuriate us, it is the compulsory nature of our insane child warehousing system and the incredible swath of treatments that are being generated to massage kids into submission. The real answers to behaviors like hyperactivity, short attention spans, distractability, scatteredness, lack of focus, poor learning skills, odd social skills and all the rest have to be overwhelmingly identified as individual, familial and community answers, not technical problems.

Rather than an endless search for the perfectability of children, parents and kids need to be asking themselves directly and clearly to describe the circumstances that will allow individual kids to develop. Rather than asking what treatments will enable a child to adapt to schooling, we need to be asking, "What kinds of places can we create where children will flourish?" Instead of an endless investigation into what is wrong with our kids, all parents should be finding out what is most right—and while we're at it, insist that the professionals keep their treatments off our kids, and the bears too.

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[6] McKnight, J., *The Careless Society*, New York: Basic Books, 1995. p. 47.

Elizabeth Byrne Ferm, from the frontispiece of her book, Freedom in Education, *Lear, New York, 1949.*

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FREEDOM IN EDUCATION[*]

by Elizabeth Byrne Ferm

Co-principal of the Stelton Modern School

CHAPTER ONE

Creative Development in Education

If human life had been left free to reveal itself, there would be no need to consider the question of education. Education, free from outer interference, would flow as normally through human life as the sun, moon and stars move on their way and so fulfill their use and destiny. I am not using the word education loosely; I am using it in a definite, particular sense, i.e., as one and the same as creative evolution.

Unless an act is the outcome of an inner necessity it is not creative. If it is not creative it cannot educate. In the degree that a human expresses himself creatively, in that degree he lives. In the degree that man does not reveal himself in his daily life, in that measure he exists as a material thing and he in no way fulfills his destiny as a self-conscious being, self-determining, self-directing and self-revealing. This point is brought out in a quotation from *Jean Christophe:*

> To create physically or spiritually is to leave the prison of the human body. To create is to do that which is. To create is to kill death. Unhappy is the soul who has never felt the urge to create. The world may give the non-creative man honor and position but in so doing it crowns no living thing. It crowns a corpse. Unhappy is the soul that does not reproduce itself like a tree in flower in the springtime.

Every human being has the urge to reveal himself in his acts and he will project himself unless interfered with. Interference, no matter how it rears its head as guidance, direction, help, making the indefinite definite, etc., only serves to perplex and confuse man. Offers of help where no help is sought for, irritate and fret the child because he does not understand the why or wherefore of the intrusion into his life. When an extraneous suggestion is made to him, he cannot relate it to himself because it has no point of

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[*] Lear Publishers, New York, 1949.

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contact with his own development. When adults insist on blocking the individual's path by trying to focus his attention on the thing or program that they have provided to further, as they think, his growth and development, he, in self-defense, must struggle, at all and any costs, to save himself. Usually he does what everything else in the universe does, he takes the line of least resistance. I believe that, to be directed from without, to follow ways and means which are not simple and direct, obscures the individual's own impulse and results in bewilderment which, if long continued, must affect and color his whole after-life.

One of the gravest objections to our present school system is the initiation of the young into forms which have not been called out by any need or desire of the child. Herding children in child centers has made it necessary to control and regulate their activities. As the child does not understand the reason for his being gathered in with so many strange children and strange adults, one of the first problems of the teacher is how to adjust him as quickly and as pleasantly as possible into a grade or group where he seems to fit. There is no time to let the child adjust himself slowly and to find his own place. In the school the child soon finds or senses that his acts are caused by an outer influence or permitted by an outer authority. The flow of his former life is diverted and consequently its course is no longer normal. His inner voice is stifled and though he may still feel the impulse to act independently, there are too many voices in that child center for him to distinguish his own.

From the standpoint of human growth, the outer voice is always false and totally unrelated to man's inner life. When the school succeeds in deadening the sound of the inner voice, it becomes an enemy to human development and a hindrance to life. You probably have often seen the disastrous effect in youths and adults from regimented and supervised activities which had been devised to aid their growth. They had followed a personal leader so long, that in a crisis they were helpless without a guide, a slogan, or some outer motive to push them into action.

The great danger in human life is that the artificially planned thing may so long encase the human being that he may learn to adapt himself to the artificial life. Do you recall how Uriah Heap explained his servility? "So many Betters." That state of the individual didn't exhaust itself with Uriah. Uriah's "Betters" are still with us in the form of self-appointed custodians. I call them self-appointed because the developing human has never sought them out or attached himself to one of them. They are forced upon him and he is unlearned in ways to resist them. It is especially difficult for the child to deal with adults when reasons for the child's subjection are advanced, such as assuring him that he is an individual "whole and complete but he is also a member of a larger whole, the Social Body." The social body is like a promise of promotion. The "but" wrings the life out of wholeness and completeness. It throws the individual off his guard through its ingratiating implications.

There would be very little hope for humanity if all humans could be wheedled or forced into step and line. Here and there a rebel takes his stand and will not submit. Sometimes the conflict is so bitter and lasting that full grown people have felt handicapped in facing a youngster who is not yet disconnected from his own center, from his own fearless inner life. Sometimes there is nothing for the adult to do but to eject the youngster from their midst. Ostracism, however, often gives the child a false sense of power and the spiritual force in his first resistance gets twisted into an outside struggle between unequal physical forces which changes its whole aspect, and may be the starting point of criminality.

I am inclined to think that, deplorable as a criminal start may be, there is more hope in it than in a submissive condition. When the conflict between adult and young is too unequal, many children withdraw to fight the power which overawes them, evasively, shiftily. In such a relationship the young pick up a false scent which, in all likelihood, will lead them very far from their inner need, from their self-conscious base. Instead of realizing that unity was to be realized in and through individuality and diversity, they are presented with a uniformity masquerading under the name of "unity."

Uniformity is a truly barren reservation in which no living thing, no creative need can grow or manifest itself. Uniformity encloses many artificial things made to look like life, but they are only appearances of life, the result of concession, compromise and insincerity. The conforming individual is like a puppet whose every move is manipulated, the directing hand skillfully hidden from the observer. The taint of uniformity, once the virus has taken effect, seems to permeate the whole after-life.

When we observe and contemplate the surrounding world, we find an harmonious evolvement flowing from within out. This unfoldment reveals an order, a rhythm, as it flows outwardly, onwardly. The earth revolves on its own axis. The seasons have a definite order and rhythm. Days, hours, time and space reveal a unity, a correlation, a continuity which manifests their course as self-consciously directed. In the genesis of human self-consciousness, the same order, the same rhythm flows from dark to light, from light to dark, from the universal to the particular.

> "There is no other way for light to break
> Save through the blackness of the midnight hour."

We have no method skillful enough to gauge the invisible psychic force of life. Nevertheless we psychically know that it does exist, that the psychic is more positive and compelling in our daily life than any object that we may weigh or handle physically. Personally I have found the psychic exchange with the young the simplest connecting link between us.

In the infant state we see the normal, natural development of unity manifested in the relation of mother and child, and also revealed in the infant at-one-ment with himself. In due time that unity between mother and child instinctively unfolds, and eventually is broken. That rupture causes a sense of separation. But separation is necessary to advance the individual's self-conscious development. It is the growth from instinct to mind.

I see mind and instinct as one and the same quality functioning differently but the same in essence. It is the unity realized in individuality and diversity. Instinct, I feel, leads man into the concrete world and there and then evolves a new form fitted to deal with tangible matter. This new form of instinct we now call mind because it serves a new need.

Unity, to be realized, must be proved and tested. It is not sufficient for the human, growing towards self-consciousness, to feel and enjoy a state of unity. Man is necessitated from an inner need to become conscious of it as a life basis. If instinct served man without a break, man could never attain self-knowledge. Instinct being, as it were, the parent of the mind, knows that its offspring or offshoot is well able to face its work alone.

So it is with the child. In due time the infant reaches out to gain contact with the world surrounding him. He kicks his legs, stretches his body, yawns, smiles, sneezes and holds on to any object which is within his grasp. These visible signs indicate that there is an inner state which is gradually unfolding. There is no definite sharp line which marks the different stages of growth. The infant kicks without seeing where or what he kicks. He smiles before he observes or distinguishes things as separate and distinct from himself. *He feels himself before he knows himself.*

But even though we cannot discern that the infant recognizes anything as separate and distinct, he is not entering the outside world unprepared. He has harmoniously developed a feeling, a sense with many attributes. These attributes lend sight to his eyes, hearing to his ears, smell to his nose, taste to his tongue, feeling to his hands. These attributes, governed and directed by his sense of touch, serve the infant by going out as scouts and returning with reports which help him to face the unknown world. But this sense of touch, with its attributes, is not subject to external things. Many sounds vibrate in the infant environment which convey no message to him.

Many objects pass before the infant's eyes without being recognized. Many odors are not detected by him. This exclusion of outer things reveals that the infant is not subject to things or influences external to his own inner need. He has a self-centered, self-conscious, self-determining and self-directing instinct which shuts out the useless and unnecessary things which would serve only to distract and confuse him. The point that I am endeavoring to emphasize is that the infant is perfectly equipped, from within, to draw in from the outside any nourishment essential to his development. Consequently we adults may free ourselves from the idea that the infant, child and youth, deprived of our wise guidance or supervision, would be "up a tree." In fact, he is very much up a tree now as the result of our interference. We have, all of us, talked more and read more about our children than we have lived with them. Froebel probably sensed that in his call,

"Come! Let us with our children live."

When a child endeavors outwardly to express an inner impulse, adults, in their eagerness to serve him, try to anticipate that need. In nine cases out of ten, they do not realize that the act is the outcome of a need for expression. The impulse is the key to the act which only the individual who tries to project the impulse, holds. Guardians of children are prone to be over-vigilant in their desire to aid and help them. Frequently the adults confuse the young, destroying the value of the impulse and its manifestations to the one who created it, because the child cannot then see himself reflected in his act. The child realizes his inner selfhood through its outer form.

It is said by those who claim to know that at no other time in the development of the human being is the rate of growth as great as it is from birth into childhood. If this is true why are adults so persistently intrusive and invasive regarding human actions? As long as the infant is immobile and quiet, the adult has an enjoyment and interest in its manifestations of life. But as soon as the child reveals a desire to go forward to meet the objective world, the adult at once restricts and hems in the natural endeavor. In some mysterious fashion the adult, at this period of growth, develops an idea that now it is his turn and so he gets busy trying out all his theories and applying all the facts that he has held in reserve. They seem to be obsessed with the idea that they must prove their value in relation to childhood by changing the child. Lack of development, fear or ignorance may account for the constant interference with childhood but that does not excuse it.

I firmly believe that ultimately no outside direction or control can permanently change the life of man. That belief sustains me when I feel disturbed by the methods advised to thwart life.

Are we fools all, to sweat among the weeds
With a small plow that does not serve to turn
The smallest furrow for the need of man?"

We may verify the result of waste in education in our present chaotic state. We are "likened to the foolish man which built his house upon the shifting sand, and the rain descended and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat upon that house and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

Pedagogy, with its plan, has tried to build a house for all men, standardized for the sake of economy and utility; decorated to cover up its ugliness. From the beginning this house has cramped the individual. The stream of his life has been so blocked and hindered by the limitations it has imposed that it has left him uncertain, unsure about his own needs.

Man's sense of beauty or use is obscured by the examples set up before him. All the houses of pedagogy are uniform. But the individual's search is not for uniformity and so he is constantly bumping into corners and cubby holes that serve no purpose for him.

The individual must have a clear field in which to build his own house, fitted for his own needs; its outer form the growth of the inner need of the dweller who builds from within out. If it is agreed that man's greatest attainment is to be come self-conscious, to know himself; that every unhampered movement of man reveals the tendency toward that end and that he shares this in common with all life forms; then no one can take from nor add to man's spiritual development. The individual alone knows the way he should go. Man, accordingly, begins, at a very early age, even in infancy, to plant a firm foot on his own ground. Intuitively man feels that when he is *en rapport* with his own creative center then he is *en rapport* with the life of the universe. Seeking for recognition and assurance from the outside is the result of previous suggestion and guidance which has left a taint of doubt and uncertainty in its wake.

The creative manifestation can be fully recognized only by the creator. No matter how well-intentioned the outer world may be in trying to help or further a creation, it is too short-sighted, in its power, to recognize its meaning. Jean Christophe tells the disappointed composer, "You did not compose for others; you wrote for yourself and God." The creator learns through his outer rebuffs that no matter at what price, the individual alone must be the judge of the value of his creation.

The individual, developing through infancy, childhood and youth, is spiritually sure of his direction. He is still rhythmically unfolding and flowing with the life of the universe. Education, being in the advance guard of art, must realize that fact to become conscious of its power and freedom.

An educational relationship is allied to the most sensitive, subtle form of life. No material substance is required for its fulfillment. A conscious recognition, a psychic exchange can furnish a center. Adult and child, bound together spiritually, have every need supplied. Lacking the spiritual, every vital living thing is missing. In contrast pedagogy must have a budget and equipment. Teachers seem to think that the material thing, the physical body, is the true approach to human life. The child is examined, tested, notes taken whereby the case may be recorded and followed up. I'm not sure that he is not finger-printed. Mentally and physically he is treated pathologically. The psychiatrist probes inwardly until it develops into a game of "cops and robbers." The psychiatrist after the individual and the individual trying to evade him.

In all accredited and approved schools adorable youngsters are subjected to great physical indignities. Once in a while a rebel turns up, refuses to submit and does what I saw a little fellow do—he runs away. Too often, however, the parents are overawed by so much expert handling of children, so they coax or bribe the runaway into returning. The child soon learns the futility of escaping, so he appears to acquiesce. I use the word "appears" advisedly, because the human knows how to camouflage. In self-defense the child seems to submit and so throws his hunters off the scent. In such an environment every physical attribute is over-accentuated. The inner life of the human cannot be recognized in such surroundings. There is, in fact, no time for such recognition even if it is believed that an inner life does exist, for the experts in charge are already overworked.

When man creates he reveals himself outwardly in some objective form, whether in the making of a chair, a portrait, or a composition. When, however, the inner expression is in any way diverted, as in having to copy some other creation by imposition—not by self-selection, we have a thing which is not self-revealing. It has no message for anyone. It clutters the road which should be left open and free.

When the human is left free to objectify his inner life, he intuitively recognizes himself. In Froebel's words, the inner has been made outer and the outer made inner, and the two are united in life. When, however, the individual is moved to action through an outer appeal, incentive or demand, he is unable to relate the achievement to an inner need. He must submit the accomplishment to the one who caused it to be made. It must be stamped as true or false, good or bad, by someone on the outside. Instead of seeing himself rejected in his work he does not know to whom to relate his action, because there is no meaning in it for him. One thing he does know—he has no relationship to it.

Distributing, transferring and transposing are often mistaken for spontaneous self-activity. Because one walks with his own legs from one point to another, carries things with one's own arms and hands from one place to another, the movement is often mistaken for freedom. When a restless child exhibits a tendency to break through a prescribed line the suggestion, "Wouldn't you like to do thus and so?" in order to divert him, tends to trouble the child more, mentally and psychically, than if he had been given a box on the ear. Consequently I regard the severest authority as less confusing to the captive human because it is more direct.

That is why the seductive methods of private schools are generally more dangerous to the development of free beings than the system of the public school. The public school is brutal in its frankness and therefore simple for an undeveloped human to understand. It is the nature of unspoiled humans to be direct, thus the bluntness of the public school is easily comprehended.

In the private schools the methods are, on the surface, more ingratiating and insidious, but the plans are just as firmly fixed for catching and holding the individual until they get his pattern set to their ideas of fitness, order, usefulness or beauty. To be allowed to shuffle towards your project instead of attacking it at once and getting it finished, doesn't open any door to freedom that I care to look through.

Whether classwork must be faced now or a thousand years hence is not the question. The question lies in the fact that the plan or project is from without and consequently is of no real value to man, to society or to life. The very laxity, because it may be confused with freedom of choice, is more vicious in its effect on the young than the authoritative "now." When the individual is prodded into action from without the motive seems to be to link the individual with the activities of the outer world. The connection seems to mean that he should enter the great arena and there compete and struggle with others for things and place. In the degree that the individual succumbs to these advances, in that degree he is introduced to a false estimate of values which can serve only to blunt his sense of spiritual values.

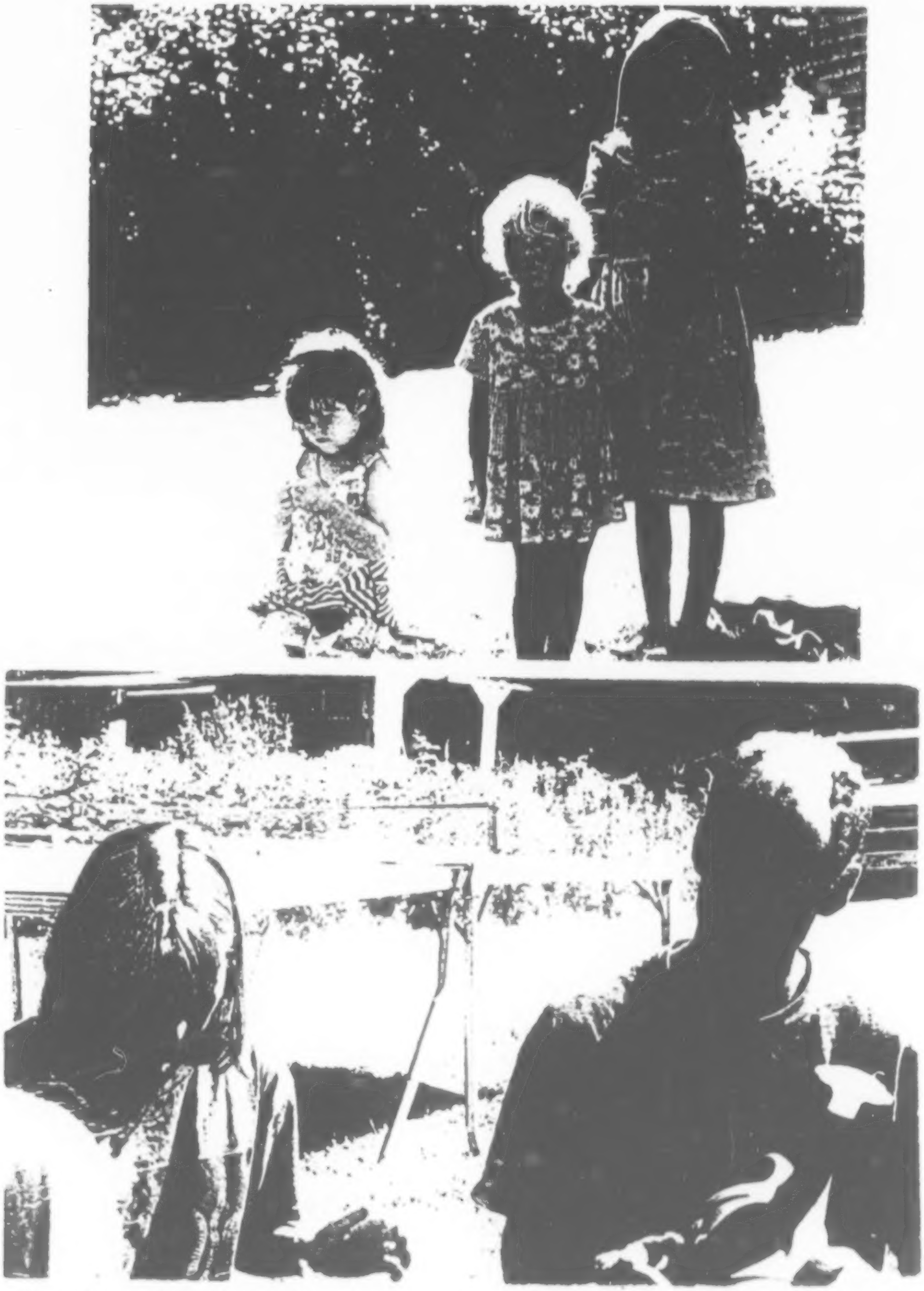
There is no uncertainty, no groping, on the part of the individual who feels himself unhampered. Every act is self-revealing, self-determined and self-directed. His absorption, when he is creative, indicates that he has some thing definite toward which he is moving. No design, no example for life can be given to man. Froebel passionately declares that "no life, not even the life of Jesus, can serve as an example." Each life is particular and unique in itself. Each life must create its own form.

Einstein's belief in the one law, the one order underlying all forms of life, enables him to search, watch and wait for the verification of his faith. Spiritually Einstein knows that the continuity of life manifests the one law and that in time he will be able to demonstrate it to himself and others. Education calls for the same faith, the same belief, the same long watch and wait until the midnight blackness shall let the light break through.

We must abandon formulas, plans, projects, assignments. We must free ourselves from every artificial device no matter how subtly employed; we cannot probe into the inner life of man. When we attempt it we find ourselves before a closed door which opens only from within out. No matter how cunningly we concoct ways and means to gain an entrance there is no ingress for the outsider.

When we have developed a true respect and regard for human life, we shall have no desire to peep in or force an entrance.

... to be continued in our next, in the timeworn tradition of the Victorians! Not a bad tradition, and even we "moderns" used to pursue it in popular magazines like the Saturday Evening Post *and* Good Housekeeping. *Perhaps it needs to be revived.*



The Bliss family, taken last summer at the Berkshire Live-out

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SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL PEOPLE

NOTES FROM AN EAST HILL JOURNAL

by Jon Bliss

Sept. 4th: With great nervousness Laura, Meg, Erica and I wait for the children to arrive at nine o'clock. The day is clear and warm. We've all made our last minute preparations. On this first day of school I find myself keeping busy at inconsequential tasks, trying to quell nagging doubts: Will the children get along with each other? Will they believe in our funny little school?

Then the cars begin pulling in and I realize we're among friends: this is Rowen, Asa, Kelsey, Ethan and the rest...and they want to be here!

Sept. 9th: Kelsey. Rowen. Clarisa, Tyler and Emma all play guitar for singing this morning; we tune up and begin Bob Dylan's "Easy Chair":

> Clouds so swift.
> the rain won't lift
> Gate won't close,
> the railin's froze
> Get your mind off winter time,
> You ain't goin' nowhere.

They all play with concentrated gusto, and the other kids are completely attentive. What's the lesson? Kids will pay attention *when they want to*; we teachers can either lead, follow, or....

Later in the morning Erica and I interview the children in our group to find out what each one wants to study this year. We get a wide range of responses: ancient Egypt: horses; royalty throughout history; Robin Hood; geometry.

Sept. 10th: We take the older kids—Rowen, Kelsey, Rey, Marisa, Tyler, Asa, and Emma—to the Outdoor Education program at Farm and Wilderness Camps to use the ropes course and low climbing chimney. As I watch the kids (securely tied in to a belayer) tenaciously work their way up the rock face, I'm reminded again how well we can persist when we understand and embrace our goals.

Sept. 20th: Anna's mother, Annette, works with Tyler, Ethan, and Rey in the afternoon on plans to complete the play structure behind the Main House. Tyler's ideal structure looks like a cross between Buckingham Palace and the tree house of the Swiss Family Robinson. Big plans!

Oct. 6th: Heard a beautiful harmony counterpoint during morning singing and realized it was Marissa's perfectly clear voice finding its way intuitively through the verses of "Jamaica Farewell."

Oct. 8th: Laura goes to the pasture to bring the horses in and finds Shadow the pony with his left rear leg dangling uselessly. We spend all night in dread. In the morning the vet confirms what we suspect: a clean break. The whole school mourns Shadow, who's friskiness and sweet personality have endeared him to everyone. We spend the day saying goodbye. Shadow is buried in the rain late in the day. All the kids have a chance to stroke his coat before he is put in the ground, and everyone gets a lock of his mane. Allie cries. "It's wrong for Shadow to die, everything's crooked," and Asa, Tyler, and Rey leave the grave with their arms around each other.

Oct. 10th: Meg's group—Anna, Allie, Ethan, and Dylan—are making miniature gnome houses of twigs, moss, and cardboard. They're working silently and intently when I look in on them. I hear Ethan say: "Pass the glue, please," as I quietly close the door.

Also working intently this morning are Rowen, Asa, Emma and Kelsey. Each one is hard at work on research projects about the five senses. Kelsey is conducting herself like a real student!

Oct. 12th: Our 2nd Saturday firewood day dawns cold and bright. Parents arrive by 10:00 to help cut and split wood. Jyle is in rare, boisterous form, Virginia is businesslike. Annette is dogged, and Joanna is her usual irreverent self. The children play in the woods and wander back to help stack wood for a while before heading into the thicket again. By noon the sun is warming us. We gather in front of the Main House for a pot-luck lunch—baked potato solid, shrimp pasta, fresh bread and cheese.

Oct. 14th: As I walked past the wood we split on Saturday, and as I listen to the children practice French in the main room, I think this is it. This is real life.

A MORNING AT EAST HILL SCHOOL:
Other Ways Of Learning
by Jack Coleman

ANDOVER "What goes on there?" It's an obvious question, one that I've asked myself many times as I drove past the buildings high above Andover. But only this week did I stop, go in, and learn about the East Hill Farm and School.

What goes on is a type of schooling that is both relaxed and serious. At nine o'clock ten of the twelve students arrive for the day. The other two are already there because their parents Jon and Laura Bliss live there and it's their school.

The first half hour is rather unstructured. Children, teachers and such parents as stick around after dropping their children off all "do their own thing." The atmosphere is an embracing one. The place itself is as important as the program. There is an immediate sense that everyone is here hecause he or she wants to be there.

Today's East Hill School had earlier lives. The cluster of modest buildings starting with a tower that says to the world, "We did it ourselves," speaks of off-the-beaten-track days. Jon's parents Richard and Ann Bliss bought the site in 1957 to operate at first as a camp for about eight children. When they turned out to have a son with special needs, they decided to start a school for him, for Jon in time and for other students. That was in the 1960's when interest in alternative forms of schooling was in style and when interest in the environment, as a subject for both joy and work, was growing rapidly.

Jon Bliss was brought up on that hill and in that school. "The days weren't all that involved with traditional academics," he recalls. "There were guitar-playing, singing, making hay, preparing meals." Somehow he got himself into Plato's *Republic* and into the world of ideas as another part of the process of growing up and of self-discovery. His interest turned more strongly to working with younger children up through what would be grade six in a traditional school. That in turn meant turning away from a boarding school to one for day students only.

So today the school operates with four regular teachers—Jon and Laura Bliss, of course, Megan Minehan for the youngest children, and Erica Bowman for the older ones. All parents are expected to commit a minimum of two afternoons a week sharing hands-on explorations with the students.

The School's Morning

The half-hour beginning at nine-thirty is a time for individual and small group practicing. To walk from room to room in this inviting setting is to see over and over a teacher and one or more students in close work together— practicing guitar, for example, or doing art work. You see that adult and child are growing together in that time.

At ten o'clock everyone sits on the floor in a circle for a time of music—no fewer than six guitars and happy songs—and announcements. It is there in the individual small touches that the school's faith in the growth of each child becomes so evident. So a boy obviously sad, even angry, because he didn't sign up soon enough for the horseback riding excursion that afternoon, isn't left to mope outside. A teacher goes to talk this out with him.

It was no surprise here, given so much interest in the environment and good health, that snack time featured fresh, crunchy vegetable pieces and wheat crackers. No sugar, thank you. An enthusiastic parent at the school that morning was Joanna Gorman. One of her children has gone from here to other schooling now, but her son Asa is currently enrolled.

(He was anxious to show me every feature and fixture of the buildings, but the schedule cut him off before we had looked in most of the cupboards.) Joanna believes firmly that we can teach ourselves. The patterns and processes of growth are such that there is a "we want to grow" spirit in all of us. Put us in an environment with other curious people, surround us with books, music, games and ideas, and we'll pick out what we most need.

"I myself got straight A's in school, but I didn't know how to think in order to do so," Joanna says. "I've home tutored my kids much of the way. But they need what East Hill can bring to them—room to identify what it is that they want to learn, even to recognize the need to learn. The time that I spend here lets my son see me learning too."

From this parent and from the Blisses themselves a distinctive message comes across: there needs to be room for feelings as much as for facts in education. So small a school with teachers so deeply dedicated to what they are doing, make those feelings possible. It may be hard for the East Hill people to say just how learning is built upon the experience and expression of feelings as well as on mastery of materials and skills, but a visitor can scarcely doubt that they believe in what they are doing—and rejoice in it.

The Outlook for This Different Way

Are Jon Bliss and parents such as Joanna Gorman worried about whether colleges will accept children with such unconventional schooling in their backgrounds? Apparently not. "More and more colleges want these kids," Joanna believes. "They want kids not driven by grades, but driven by the urge to learn more."

The financial side of such schooling is, not surprisingly, shaky. Tuition covers two thirds of the $37,500 budget for the current year. (Heads of all other schools must be shocked and envious to know that the expense budget has only four lines in it: salaries, insurance, utilities and food for snacks.) That leaves a minimum of $12,500 to be raised through contribution and grants just to stay afloat at the present level.

"But it's not enough, " Jon insists. "We have to pay our teachers more or they will necessarily move on." Fund-raising appeals went out to three hundred and fifty people this year. Some of them cherish the memory of Richard Bliss, Jon's revered father, and appreciate Ann Bliss' continuing involvement. Others simply get turned on by the idea that such an approach to schooling is worth a strong try as a way to build free, caring and curious children. This year's appeal letter had a twenty-five percent response, high for such letters, with an average gift of eighty dollars.

A student body of twenty, rather than twelve, would make a big difference at East Hill. That in turn means more people in this region need to know what goes on up there on East Hill Road in Andover.

Jon's enthusiasm for what he is doing may be the school's biggest asset. "For me this has been an epiphany. I'm realizing every day what a privilege it is to do what I enjoy so much—to build music and writing and caring into the day's work. Sometimes I look around in that circle each morning and get swept up by seeing that what I love so much is all real and all here."

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THE INNOVATIVE CLASSROOM

Martha Goff Stoner, Ph.D., teaches English literature at a college in Manchester, Michigan. She has given us poems for the Journal of Family Life, *and we hope she will give us more articles or poems for* ΣΚΟΛΕ *in the future.*

RELEASE THE BODY, RELEASE THE MIND
by Martha Goff Stoner

As a teacher of college literature and writing, I spent almost fifteen years working with students whose bodies were caged by desks, and whose energy and freedom of thought were also caged by the fact that their bodies were imprisoned. Like most of my fellow teachers, it never occurred to me that the physical body had anything to do with the learning process. Yet I now know that the mind feeds the body and the body feeds the mind in a constant dance of fluctuating, and often imperceptible, energy flow.

From the time I was young, I was a dancer, and as a college student, I learned yoga, but when I entered the classroom to teach, I forgot that I was bringing a body with me, and I didn't notice that my students had also brought theirs. But I did notice very early in my teaching career that my students experienced a lot of anxiety when faced with writing assignments.

Their anxiety was noticeable in the way they hunched their shoulders and gripped their pens when writing in class/or in the way they stood before me after class asking questions about an assignment, nervously shifting from one foot to the other or not making eye contact.

Early in my teaching career, I taught many freshman composition courses. These, as you know, are required courses, and rarely do the students like writing or think of themselves as writers. Not only did these students carry a significant burden of anxiety, they also clung to prejudices about themselves and about writing classes. Many *knew* they couldn't write well, *hated* writing classes, and were suspicious of "English" teachers.

Aware of my students' anxiety and resentment, I decided I would be more likely to teach them to write well if I first attempted to relieve them of their resistance to writing, to writing classes, and to writing teachers. My strategy included lots of freewriting (writing which is not critiqued and in which the student is counseled to not worry about grammar, punctuation, or spelling, but to simply put words on paper), many hours of individual conferences in which I verbally encouraged and cajoled, numerous ungraded essay assignments, emphasis upon end-of-the-term writing for the grade (this allowed students to be graded upon improvement), and practice in meditation to counter in-the-moment anxiety.

It was the use of meditation in the classroom that initiated the discoveries that led to my current use of body movement in writing classes. Teaching meditation in a conventional college classroom was an unheard of practice in 1985 when I began doing this. I was hesitant at first because I feared my students would react negatively. But I knew that meditation calmed my nerves and thought it might also calm theirs.

I taught a very simple breath-awareness technique. I asked my students to sit quietly at the beginning of each class with their eyes closed. When everyone was silent and when bodies seemed still, I asked students to bring their awareness to their breath and to allow their thoughts to float through their consciousness without clinging to them. (I taught a specific technique for thought flow which I won't recount here because it is not the focus of this essay.) We practiced this technique for five minutes at the beginning of class. Afterwards, students wrote for five minutes or so about anything that came to their minds. They were told that their writing was private and that they needn't worry about any of the conventional forms—spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. I emphasized that these two experiences—the meditation and the writing—were entirely for the student—not for me. I stayed out of their 10-minute free time as much as I could.

The results were astonishing—far beyond anything I expected when I tentatively began the practice. As one student wrote in her end-of-the-term course evaluation:

> The meditations helped me a great deal in relaxing and learning how to let myself write without restrictions. I think this writing adds a lot to the course. It helped me see a lot of things about myself that I hadn't seen before. I also think it's good because you can go back, re-read the meditation, and see how you've grown as a writer and as a person.

Meditation practice enabled many students to relax before they wrote and to write freely once they put pen to paper. As I watched students writing after meditation, however, I noticed something else. I noticed a shift in the way their bodies looked. After meditation, everyone was writing. Rarely did I see anyone looking out the window, bored. Rarely did I see anyone sitting back in his chair, chewing on his pencil, frustrated and unable to write. Typically, students seemed alert and engaged in their writing. They leaned forward over their paper, determined to catch the flow before it stopped. Meditation after meditation, day after day, everyone was writing calmly in a spirit of flow, and many sighs of satisfaction or smiles were evident when students looked up from their papers having said all they had to say.

Though students knew the writing was private and that they did not have to share it aloud in class or turn it in after class, many students wanted to read aloud after meditation and writing practice. The following indicates just how much had changed for one student:

> I learned that I can write. If somebody allows me to write about what I feel is important, and how I want to express it I can do it. When I came into this class for the first time I thought I would never be able to write. Now I love writing; expressing myself in new ways.

What more could a teacher ask for?

Yet I was more than fortunate, for I received more. As I experimented with meditation, I learned that the body was part of the writing act. Movement, I noticed, seemed to be expressive of what was happening in the mind of the writer. A calm, alert body seemed connected to a satisfying writing experience. Body reflected mind.

From my own writing experience, I knew that when I was frustrated, when ideas did not seem to come, I might jump up from my desk and pace. Sometimes I would open a window and breathe the fresh air. Or perhaps, I would leave my study and go out for a walk.

I thought of these acts, if I thought of them at all, as ways of "getting away" from my frustration. It had never occurred to me that perhaps by moving my body, I was actually enabling myself to think.

Now, I began to suspect that body movement was not just a *reflection* of what was going on in the mind but that it might also *alter* what was going on in the mind. If this were true, our bodies could become part of our learning experience. I began asking students to get up out of their seats, to wander aimlessly, to hop, to sit on the floor, to go out doors.

Consider:

> *It is a gray November day. My students walk into the classroom and sit at their desks. No meditation today. I ask the students to write spontaneous free-writing. I tell them the writing will be private. Some bend over ttheir writing. Some can't seem to begin and keep gazing out the window. A few yawn and lean back in their seats, idly doodling with their pencils. After a time, I ask them to stop writing, to stand up and to walk out into the hallway and wait for me there. The students appear surprised, but do as I ask. In the hall, I tell them, "Now go back into the classroom, only this time, walk in backwards, find your paper and pen, then sit on the floor and write whatever is in your mind. Immediately, they begin talking to each other, some laughing, some directing sarcastic remarks at me. A few of the more adventurous begin the backward walk into the classroom. More giggling ensues as more students follow, some bumping into the students behind (ahead of) them. A young man trips and makes a big display of falling. Virtually everyone is laughing now. By the time they have found their paper and pens and are sitting on the floor, there's general uproar and confusion. Lots of talking. Lots of laughing. In my "teacherly" voice, I rise above the noise to remind them that they are to write, in silence now, whatever is on their minds.*
>
> *Bodies attack paper. Everyone is engaged in the writing. No one is talking. No one is looking out the window. Attention is focused on the page. What has happened? A simple waking-up exercise. Not only have I asked them to move their bodies when they thought they'd be sitting for an hour, but I've asked them to move in an unconventional, albeit relatively safe, fashion—backwards—and I've asked them to sit where they typically do not sit in a classroom—on the floor.*
>
> *After the writing, I ask if anyone would like to read their floor-sitting writing. Several hands go up. Jokes fly off the pages. One reader-writer hits a deep, serious vein. Everyone listens quietly and respectfully. I ask those who volunteered to read the floor-sitting writing if they would like to read their chair-sitting pieces aloud. Some do. To a person, they all prefer*

> *their second writing. Even those who did not volunteer to read chime in when asked what it was about the second piece that they liked better. They cite characteristics like spontaneity, excitement, truth. "That's the real me," says one student. "When I was sitting in my chair I was being good, a good student. Here on the floor I'm just a nobody and I can say anything I want. Walking backwards felt goofy and risky; it made me feel like writing goofy and risky too."*

It is certainly true that simply doing something unconventional in a classroom can shake things up enough to cause authentic writing to occur. But in this case, each student's body was involved in the act. They were not spectators of someone else's unconventionality. They all took part in it.

But I wonder if even more than this happened when the students moved backward. I wonder if a physiological transformation took place as the students moved. Did the fact that they moved cause their writing to be more exciting? More pleasurable?

Consider, for a moment, the phenomenon of incubation. We all know about this process—a person is stuck in the midst of a creative project, has run out of ideas, or is perplexed about a particularly knotty problem that seems to have no solution. He or she takes a walk, drives to the store, goes to sleep or in some other way engages the body in action. For a time, the conscious mind forgets the problem and then suddenly, as if from nowhere, "eureka!" the solution pops into the mind.

Where did that solution come from? Is the phenomenon of incubation a matter of simply taking time out from focusing the mind on the issue at hand, thereby giving the mind enough rest to allow an idea to emerge, or is the body itself playing a key role in both the fact that the idea does emerge and, even, in the nature of the idea that emerges?

Might a walk in the woods promote a different train of thought and thereby enable a certain form of creative idea to emerge whereas a jog through two miles of city streets might be responsible for significantly different ideas? Certainly, there are many variables here. The environments are different.

The type of person who chooses such environments and activities is, arguably, different. So, logically we assume, they would produce different ideas. But is it possible that in addition to these different environments and personality traits, the actual movement of the bodies influenced the nature of the ideas that emerged? If we move slowly, do we think differently than when we move quickly? If we walk backwards, does our thinking reorient itself? If we hop, skip, jump, do we shift our inner awareness and affect our way of expressing that awareness?

What is the body doing? How is it molding or reflecting back to us our thought processes? Can we discover individualized body rhythms that make it more likely for us to be creatively expressive and fulfilled?

Is it possible that a person who believes "I cannot write" might become a writer if she first became a dancer?

These questions lead us into the realm of consciousness studies. To ask if the body might in some way be a repository of ideas is to ask a fundamentally materialist question. That is, we seem to be asking if thoughts "reside" in the body, if consciousness has a location that we might someday be able to map in the body. But those who study consciousness know that consciousness is much more elusive than these questions imply. If, through practice and experimentation we find ourselves able to say that movement of the body *does* affect thought, we cannot so easily explain why this is so.*

We can, however, begin to include body movement in our classrooms. Without precisely understanding the mechanism, we can still conduct the experiments that will lead us to a deeper understanding of the role the body plays in learning. We can study ourselves and our students. We can notice that in moving, we grow, in remaining static, we inhibit. We can affirm that if we release the body into movement, so too do we release the mind.

* I am researching these questions and would be interested in hearing from readers who have thoughts, questions, research interests in the area of the body and consciousness. You can write to be at PO Box 368, Manchester, MI 48158.

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John D. Lawry is a professor of psychology at Marymount College, 100 Marymount Avenue, Tarrytown, NY 10591-3796. John sent us an earlier article, "Caritas in the Classroom; the Opening of the American Student's Heart," reprinted from College Teaching, *Vol. 38, #3, which appeared in ΣΚΟΛΕ, Vol. III #1, Winter, 1996. The following article is the third chapter taken from John's upcoming book,* The Opening of the American Heart: Loving our Students. *Thanks, John!*

DEFUSING THE MESSAGES THAT ROB OUR STUDENTS OF THEIR INTELLIGENCE

by John Lawry

Two of the most important thinkers of the 20th century, William James and Albert Einstein, have both argued that most of us are using only ten to fifteen percent of our natural ability ninety-nine percent of the time. The analogy I use with my students is to imagine a car with ten cylinders and only one is working. We don't notice it, however, because that is true for the cars that everyone else drives as well. If that's true, and I believe that it is, then virtually everyone has the capacity to be a genius; i.e., run on ten cylinders rather than one. In fact, running on two cylinders would probably qualify for what we call genius because that would be using twice as much intelligence as most of us!

Ever since reading Leslie LeCron's book, *The Complete Guide to Hypnosis*, I have been fascinated by what hypnotists call "negative imprints" and their effects on our ability to learn. It seems that the unconscious mind is ever vigilant and remembers things literally that were said to us especially when we were children and did not have the adult "defenses" that we develop as we get older. These messages become "imprinted" on the unconscious and affect us though we are usually unaware of them. The imprints can be positive or negative but, according to Bloch: ". . . at least seventy-five percent of a child's early programming is negative,"[1] thus "negative imprints."

I would like to share what happened in a class I taught recently but first, I have to give you some background on hypnosis and the effects of "imprints." The example that LeCron gives in his book is an interesting one. A physician who himself used hypnosis sent his nineteen-year-old daughter to LeCron because she was tested as having an IQ of approximately 135 and yet she was failing two courses and just barely passing others at an unidentified university in California. During her first two years in high school she was an A student, but the following year her grades tumbled and never recovered. When she was interviewed by LeCron she remarked, "I guess I'm just stupid. . . I must be a nitwit."

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[1] Douglas Bloch, "Releasing the Beliefs That Bind," *Yoga Journal*, May/June 1990, p. 16.

LeCron tells us that very frequently an "active" imprint will influence the very wording of our conversation. He suspected that her remark offered a clue. LeCron used what is called the "ideomotor finger technique," in which the client is put into a trance and told that each of four fingers (preferably on one hand) will indicate a different response depending upon which one rises in response to a question. For example, the forefinger might stand for "yes," the middle finger for "no," the ring finger for "I do not know," and the little finger for "I do not wish to answer." LeCron tells the reader that it is important for the unconscious to have the option of not revealing something for which the conscious mind is not ready to hear.

The first question that LeCron asked the young woman was whether there was something blocking her from studying and doing well in class. Sure enough, the forefinger rose! Through a series of ingenious questions, LeCron was able to determine that indeed at the age of sixteen the young woman's father had said something to her in the living room. Then using age regression, the woman was regressed back to the time of the experience. She described seeing her father, scolding her and apparently quite angry. She had made a foolish mistake in carrying out a request of his. She felt embarrassed and upset. At which point her father said, "You're just stupid; you're a nitwit."

After this discovery, LeCron helped the young woman to understand the power of imprints and that her father had been speaking in anger. In addition, when the father was informed, he responded by telling his daughter that he was really quite proud of her and did not really believe that she was stupid but rather quite intelligent. This had the effect of replacing the negative imprint with more positive ones. LeCron informs us that "within a short time her grades soared."[2]

I read this account to my class in Developmental Psychology in order to impress upon them the power of our words on children, especially in the roles of parents and teachers. I could tell they were really listening as we discussed afterwards the observation of William James that we normally only use approximately ten percent of our natural ability. I suggested that one of the major obstacles to the full flowering of our native intelligence was probably negative imprints. I asked how many in the room had ever heard how "stupid, bad," etc. they were in the course of growing up: "Of course, our parents, teachers did not mean for us to take this literally but our unconscious was not able to discriminate at the time." Everyone raised their hand.

At the end of the next class, a student handed me the following letter:

> Dear Dr. Lawry,
>
> Last night I was talking to my friend and telling her about my unhappiness regarding men. More specifically, I'm not what you call "lucky in love." I find it hard to meet guys; actually it's not hard meeting them. but I rarely date anyone. I thought back to the article we read in class on imprinting. I had or actually remembered an experience similar to what had been discussed in the article. My mother always stressed the importance of independence in all aspects of my life. As you probably know I want to be a doctor, so I feel that independence and hard work will only help me to achieve this goal. I'm happy with all other aspects of my life except for the romantic.
>
> Last night I remembered a conversation that my mom had with some relatives, I believe, two or three years ago. My aunt made a comment about this guy in her town that I would like. My mother immediately spoke up and said (It's funny because I remember word for word what she said.), "Kim doesn't need anybody, she's going to be a doctor." By this comment my mother was, or at least I thought she was, trying to tell me that by needing somebody (specifically a man with whom I would be romantically in-

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[2] Leslie LeCron, *The Complete Guide To Hypnosis* (Los Angeles: Nash, 1971), p.16.

> volved), I was inadequate and dependent. I feel that I have carried those words around with me and purposely stayed away from any man who showed interest. By dating someone or being close to someone, I've always felt that it was wrong, that that particular void in my life I should be able to fill myself. I've always thought that my needing someone was a terrible weakness that would affect my independence and in turn serve as a blockage in achieving my goals.
>
> By remembering that comment made by my mother, I am now beginning to recognize its effect on me. I'm slowly beginning to learn that just like everyone else I need somebody too, and that's not bad. At any rate, thank you for reading that article. It's always nice to find out things about myself as well as other people when reading psychology. I find it very satisfiying when I can directly apply psychology's teaching to myself. I thought I would share this with you, thanks again.

Though Kim did not feel comfortable sharing this with the rest of the class I obtained her permission to share it with you the reader. However, something happened later on in the semester that served as a good occasion to illustrate the power of negative imprints to the rest of the class. A rather shy student was leading a discussion of an article read for class when all of a sudden she said, "When I was younger I was really a bad girl." I immediately stopped the discussion and asked the class, "Did everyone hear what Devita just said?" "'Bad girl' was what her mother probably called her at various times when she was young, right, Devita?" "Yes," she said, "You're right. I never thought about it before." I asked the class to imagine the price of going through life thinking of oneself as having been a "bad girl." (I was tempted to ask how many "bad girls" there were in the class but I resisted the temptation.) The class received a memorable lesson in the power of negative imprints and Devita wrote in her final exam that she was working hard to erase that tape of "bad girl" from her childhood memory.

One question I have been asking myself ever since this class is how much of my students' failure can be attributed to negative imprinting that they have been exposed to since birth. Perhaps a more important question is what can I, as a teacher, do to erase those imprints and better yet, change them into postive ones.

I began to get some insight when I read the following story as reported by Dr. Mudra, a former wrestling coach:

> We had a wrestler at Adams State College when I was there who was confused about the quality of his opponent. There were two boys named Martinez in one of our meets. One was a great wrestler and one was a poor wrestler. The one our boy was wrestling was really the good one, but he thought he was wrestling the poor one. Our boy was just an ordinary, average wrestler but he went out there and tore the boy up. After the match, we rushed down to the locker room to congratulate him. He was standing on the bench there and we were telling him about how great it was. He was really puzzled. When he finally became aware of what had happened, he fell off the bench! Now if he had really known, I am sure he would have been pinned in the first period. But because he didn't know, he performed at a level that was not thought possible. Think of how surprised the other wrestler was to have this boy come out there like a tiger![3]

It was not until I saw the movie "Stand and Deliver," however, that I began to formulate an answer. I agree with observers like Lee Shulman of Stanford University that Jaime Escalante apparently has a genius for finding the right metaphor in teaching mathematics. But what Shulman and others do not remark on was how Escalante is able to transform all of those negative imprints his students have been exposed to: "Mr. Escalante, you don't understand. *If we could learn algebra, we wouldn't be in your class* (emphasis mine)."[4] Those who have seen the movie "Stand and Deliver" know that not only did these high school kids from the barrio in L.A. learn algebra but they went on to learn college-level calculus as well. In fact, they learned it so well that the Education Testing Service (ETS) conducted an investigation and made his students take another test, which they passed with equally high scores!

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[3] Dr. Mudra quoted in Arthur Combs, Donald Avila & William Purkey, *Helping Relationships: Basic Concepts for the Helping Professions* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1978, 2nd ed.), p. 87.

[4] Lee Shulman, "'It's Like ...' The Bridges Teachers Build," *American Educator*, 1989, 13:8.

The final piece in the puzzle emerged in the following incident. I had an experience where a student, Bonnie, had been performing at a mediocre level (C, C+, D+) on the first three quizzes in my General Psychology class. After class following feedback on the third quiz, Bonnie came up to inform me that she was going to get an A on the next quiz. It took her two more quizzes to do it but Bonnie did in fact get the A. This gave me an idea and I decided to conduct an experiment in the class before the seventh and final quiz. I asked this same class to make a contract with themselves in which they, like Bonnie, would agree to get the highest grade of the semester on the last quiz. I did a brief relaxation exercise and asked them to visualize a grade higher than any of the previous six obtained so far. When they did so I asked them to write the following statement: "I am going to get a grade of at least—on the final quiz," fill in the grade, sign it and hand it in. What happened was truly amazing. Of the nineteen students in class that day, eleven (fifty-eight percent) received a grade higher than the previous quiz and only three students scored lower. This was statistically significant (*z-test*=2.32, $p<.05$). Furthermore, the class as a whole received the highest score on the average compared to the other six quizzes.

I think this proves that among other things good teaching is getting students to believe that they really can do it and erasing those negative imprints. I suspect that this is what good coaches do instinctively and so we educators and parents have to learn how to be more like coaches and less like referees.

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THINKING ABOUT EDUCATION

Bob Kastelic has been a classroom teacher and is now a professor of education. He has sent us several articles reflecting his thoughts about child-rearing, learning, and just being human in the world. Here are two that offer more food for thought:

MR. ROGERS AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD AS A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOR

by Robert L. Kastelic, Ed.D.

During the formulative years of one to six years old, many children watch "Mr. Rogers Neighborhood" on television. My first encounter with Fred was as a teenager in the mid-1960's. I came home from school one day and my youngest brother was watching the show. I observed the show for about 3 or 4 minutes and then asked my mom why she allowed my brother to watch such a show. Of course, at the time, I did not have any idea what I was really talking about. Nor did I realize the positive impact that Mr. Rogers was already having on generations of children across the United States. I was acting out teenage behavior. Since that time, I have done my homework. I have worked to clarify my perceptions, investigated some more aspects of the program, and found some amazing results by changing my thinking. In short, I was missing a large part of the show because, I needed more information. Many of us are caught in this kind of perceptual quagmire and what we need is, more information. We may also need some space and time to digest the information into developing some order and sense.

My beginning level of understanding began when I heard little kids ask adults to be quiet when Mr. Rogers came on the television. They would pull up their pillows and blankets and get comfortable ready to enjoy the next slice of time with their television friend. Much has been said with a snicker about Mr. Rogers but, there seems to be a deep-seated quality that exists with the show that generations of kids find to be a special part of their day. This article is an opportunity to examine the show in order to expand one's perception about what I perceive to be one of the **slickest**

head trips on television. Of course, all evaluation begins with perception.

The Neighborhood

When you arrive as the viewer at Mr. Rogers' television house you are included. Most television is exclusive, but with Rogers you are included in all of the activities. From the moment he enters the door your curiosity is stimulated. Seldom, does he enter the house without bringing something along with him. This is a very smooth move. If you don't think so, try this move with a room full of kids. Watch what happens without any prompting. You will be confronted with statements such as, "What'cha got? Huh? What's that ?" and on, and on. You will capture the children's full attention in seconds.

There is also alot of implicit and explicit order in the performance of Rogers. Beginning at the point where he hangs up his jacket in the closet, to changing his shoes, to feeding his fish, his tasks are done in a deliberate and responsible manner. Few programs on television make clear the message of appropriate behavior in the manner that Mr. Rogers does while in the neighborhood. Many of the basic needs are met in this 'hood. Belonging and love, freedom, fun and enjoyment, power and empowerment all are demonstrated in this curriculum. You always get the direct impression that you belong here and are never reprimanded for having missed any of the sessions. It's sort of a television version of unconditional love. The viewer is continually empowered as Rogers works to talk with the child rather than, at them.

A plethora of songs written by Mr. Rogers communicate to children how to deal with issues that are important to them. From, "Your Body's Fancy," to other neighborhood topics the lyrics are clever and the tunes are easy to learn. The show presents one of the few neighborhoods today that **we can all feel safe** in. Actually, when was the last time that you called someone Mister, and intended it with respect, in your neighborhood? Also, it's one of the few households that has a male figurehead available during the day.

Land of Make Believe

The Neighborhood program also promotes a significant amount of emphasis in the imagination of children. Daily trips with specific themes to The Land of Make Believe, are looked forward to with pleasure by many children. The toy trolley signals an adventure in imagination is underway. Once viewers have arrived in the alternative neighborhood we are treated to an array of friends. These are quite a special selection of friends too. At times it looks like a, Who's Who, in the social development stages of real life. While The Land of Make Believe is fictional, there are a variety of personality profiles represented there. Played out in puppet form the characters take on personalities that many children might identify with in real life. For example,there's a shy bashful kitten that everyone looks out for. An educated and curious, X, the owl. There is Lady Fairchild, who acts nothing like a fair child. There is a royal family consisting of King Friday, his wife, and his son, Prince Tuesday. There are always people coming and going in this land. A loyal dog named Bob who is part dog and part human and Lady Aberleen are actors. Challenging topics of controversy and opinion take place in this land and Mr. Rogers always meets us on our return with questions that help viewers to think about what happened and what might occur in the following episode.

Field trips and Friends

For a variety of circumstances many children are bound to the house for the day. Field trips may be out of the question for some kids unless you watch Mr. Rogers. Actually, the most interesting part of many of the shows are the field trips. Fred has taken us to places that we might never go to but we are fascinated with knowing more about. As viewers, you might go to a pretzel factory, a farm or a music store. There's always someplace interesting to investigate. One field trip went to a company that published books and with the author showed and explained how his book was being printed.

Rogers also presents field trips that are intended to reduce children's fears. On one show he addressed the concerns about the first day at school. Many children will be riding the school bus for the first time and the program addressed the fears and concerns with going to school and riding the bus. So, Fred and a camera crew demonstrated how children get on the bus and talk to the driver. Big concerns, if you are 5 or 6 years old. It's scary leaving your mom at the bus stop and driving off with a bus full of other kids, who are also scarred. Other informative programs which had guest friends have included, but not been limited to, YoYo Ma, Winton Marsaillis, sports figures, and authors. There is a cultural event of sorts taking place at various times on the show.

Dealing with Problems and Learning Tasks

Mr. Rogers is no wimp when it comes to dealing with social issues. He approaches pressing problems such as divorce, war, death, disabilities, and fighting. He has presented the issues surrounding the buildup of nuclear arms in a continuing series of programs. Another series of programs, dealt with peer pressure and what it means to be on a team. On an everyday household level he has modeled cleaning up, taking care of things, writing lists of things to do and the responsibility of feeding the fish.

For many children the kitchen is a wonderful place filled with delightful smells, good food and warm conversation. However, for some children the kitchen is off limits. It's a place where only adults are allowed to perform and serve. But, what can be more emancipating then to learn how to get around the kitchen? Fred models how to work in a responsible manner. Fred models using kitchen tools in the correct and safe way. He returns things back to where he found them and makes this obvious to viewers. Other tasks are equally perceived as valuable in a child's life. For example, learning how to tie your own shoes [especially important before velcro straps]. Learning to snap your fingers may not be a big deal now but, when you are 5 or 6 it may mean moving up the social ladder. Or, how about learning to whistle and of course, saying big grown-up words. All of these concerns and more are addressed by Mr. Rogers during daily television sessions.

Affective versus Cognitive Development

This program is not a Sesame Street-styled show. It should not be confused with other children's shows that promote repetitive tasks and quick-paced, action-packed events happening in a sequence. This show deals with a much different agenda. While other childrens' shows may deal with the cognitive development of the viewers, this program deals with the affective domain. The Mr. Rogers Neighborhood program might be considered by some as a self esteem shot in the arm. While other programs may place emphasis on presenting and learning the alphabet or numbers, this program places emphasis on being in control of one's feelings and learning how to live appropriately in the complex world we live in.

"I like you just the way you are. There's only one of you and there will never be another one of you. You are very special, just the way you are." These are often heard statements spoken by Mr. Rogers. When was the last time someone told you that they liked you just the way you are?

In the Psychology and Teacher Education classes I teach I frequently use the Neighborhood programs and Fred Rogers as examples of the significance of the value imprint period 0-6 years old. While the program may not be suitable for all learners it may provide some good ideas to begin setting up a suitable learning format.

Conclusion

We all could learn a lot from Fred Rogers. Not to be misunderstood, I am not intending to promote the watching of more television. However, television just happens to be the democratic vehicle by which we all know of Mr. Rogers and get to view his work on a regular basis. There are not too many quality educational shows that have been on television for over twenty years.We also might learn about getting our basic needs met in appropriate ways, as well as, how to assist children in getting their needs met too. Parents can learn what is important to kids and what are some of the normal growing up concerns children are having.Also, teachers could learn the value of classroom pacing from the show.

In an age where we are short on role models for our children, Mr. Rogers is sensitive, caring, creative, and intelligent. What better role model could we want? And, not only a role model for our children. Adults might learn something about role modeling from Mr. Rogers. We could all learn how to be better neighbors, have better manners, be in control of our feelings. We also might learn to like each other, **just the way we are.**

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STUDENT WRITINGS

FALL FROM GRACE

Snap, crash, thud,
When the maple branch broke
and I fell, 10, 20, 30 feet,
red-stained pavement
soaked in blood,
Broken bones,
scratched face,
A week in bed
not moving, not playing, not laughing
only hurting

—Oliver Leue

Richard Lewis (Touchstone Center) describes this inspired drawing by his 4 1/2-year-old daughter Sarah as "a smile for Mary"—wow! Thanks, Sarah, and thanks, Richard for sending it!

REVIEWS

CHILDREN'S PAST LIVES:
How Past Life Memories Affect Your Child

by Carol Bowman
Bantam Books

Reviewed by Ellen Becker

This book has a deceptively simple title, but it has profound things to say to our times. It treats a subject close to being taboo in Western culture—past lives and reincarnation—from the personal experiences of the author and her children—and breaks through all the disbeliefs I have had about the subject. It makes the most convincing case I've ever read for the reality of past lives, for both children and adults.

Carol Bowman's focus is on children—how open they are in their young years to past life experiences' bleeding through to this life, particularly if they died a violent death. Her aim is to open parents to the reality of past lives and prepare them to support their children if past life memories come flooding through so that they can help their children heal from old traumas. Central to her thinking and to this book is her belief that the remembrances and the making conscious of a traumatic past life can bring a catharsis and a profound healing of memories or feelings that otherwise might torment the child for the rest of its life.

Children are particularly open to these memories, the author has found, and particularly open to learning from them and being healed. As we age, she states, the memories fade and our years can bury our past life experiences under layers of beliefs, ideas, experiences and resistance, so that this form of healing is much more difficult.

The first part of the book is devoted to the personal experiences that led her to the profound realizations she came to. It all began through her children—her five-year-old son Chase suddenly became inexplicably and seriously terrified of fireworks at the age of five, though in prior years, he'd had no such fears. Later that year she related this fact to a hypnotherapist who was visiting and doing past life regressions with adults. He suggested that she sit her son in her lap and he'd ask him some questions. She had no expectation that children could remember past lives, so what transpired next was a complete shock.

Without the need of hypnotic induction, her son connected immediately with a scene in which he was a grown man in a battle field carrying a long gun with a sword at the end. He was firing at anything that moved and was soon shot in the wrist and taken from the battle by a companion to an open tented area where wounded soldiers were being treated. The location of the wrist wound corresponded exactly to a spot of severe eczema her son had had since he was a baby. Within a few days of this recall, the eczema disappeared from her son's wrist and never reappeared. The fear of fireworks did also.

This incident was just the beginning of her experiences with her children's recall of past lives. She'd had her own past life experiences under the guidance of the same hypnotherapist, which are fascinating in themselves, but the ease with which her children were able to access these memories and the marked healing they produced fascinated her and aroused her curiosity about the possibility of similar occurrences of such memories in other children. She began to look for the corroboration of others regarding past lives and children.

Bowman describes the work of many writers and practitioners she has discovered including Helen Wambach, Edith Fiore, and Roger Woolger. I've worked with Roger Woolger on past life regressions myself and attended with the author the very workshop in upstate New York to which she refers in her book. But my belief, until I read this book, was that it doesn't matter whether or not you believe in past lives; they're useful for healing in any case.

Her recounting of the research of Dr. Ian Stevenson changed all that for me. Here is a man who has studied—and who continues to study—thousands of cases worldwide (more than twenty-six hundred so far) of children's spontaneous recollections of past lives, over half of them persisting despite their parents' attempts to suppress them. The importance of Dr. Stevenson's research cannot be discredited as so many accounts of past recall, such as the famous "Bridey Murphy" case, have been universally dismissed as elaborate hoaxes on the basis of charges of suggestion by a hypnotherapist and of hidden access to other sources of information about the period being allegedly recalled. Stevenson limits his research to only subjects who manifest spontaneous recall, and has developed exhaustive techniques for checking and matching a child's recall of a past life against real evidential details discoverable in this life and for investigating the issue of whether the child could have learned details of the past life recalled through normal means.

Among his cases he has found numerous children who could locate the very street and house where they had lived in the past life, who spoke to their spouse and relatives from that prior life in ways uniquely appropriate to the prior relationship, who knew facts that only that now-dead person could have known. He found numbers of children—fully one third of his verified cases—who bore birthmarks that exactly matched wounds they suffered at their death. For example, a young boy had died in his prior life from a shotgun blast to the chest. In this life, birth marks on his chest exactly matched autopsy reports of the entry wounds of the bullets. One of his most spectacular cases is of a young boy, two years old, who recalled being murdered as a child in the prior life. He kept repeating his story for the next two years to his family and friends until the story finally spread to neighboring districts where the father of the murdered boy heard the tale. When the child in this life finally met his former father, he recognized him immediately, and told details of his earlier death all of which matched the confession of one of the murderers and the material evidence of the crime. Furthermore he related other details of his prior life that were confirmed by his former family.

In the second part of her book, Carol Bowman describes how parents can discern whether their child is having a past life memory or a fantasy; she discusses what sorts of things can trigger such an memory and she describes what parents can do to help their child should a memory surface. Parents can be crucial in drawing out the memory and creating the opportunity for the child to be healed of any trauma, she believes. They can help a young child separate the past from the present and after the memory has emerged, help the child to realize that those events happened in the past and that this life is different. She recounts tale after tale of the huge relief that children feel in having any confusion about this cleared up and in realizing they are safe now. She also relates how difficult it can be for a child if his or her parents belittle or discredit the past life memory.

The third and last part of her book is a discussion of the location that ideas about past lives and reincarnation have had in our culture. She traces and explains why historically they have been repressed in Western culture. She notes that during the time of Jesus, reincarnation was one of the many common ideas and/or beliefs of the day and after Jesus' death, Christianity itself existed in the form of many different factions with different ideas including reincarnation. It wasn't until Emperor Constantine, who, wanting to consolidate his grip and unify the then disintegrating Roman Empire, offered to throw his weight behind Christianity if the factions would agree to a single creed; in the approved form, reincarnation was decreed a crime worthy of excommunication.

When belief in reincarnation appeared again in the thirteenth century among a devout sect of Christians, the Cathars of France, Christianity engaged in a brutal purge, a "crusade" that murdered more than half a million people, all inhabitants of the region of Occitanie (or Languedoc, if one uses the term based on their pronunciation of the word "yes"), and paved the way for the Inquisition. She suggests that these are the powerful historical events that have driven the idea from our Western minds and instilled fear in us all for even entertaining the idea. She tells of the fear parents express to her when reporting their children's past life recollections, introducing themselves by saying, "Now I hope you don't think I'm crazy, but..."

She then makes a very perceptive comment about why our Western culture might have aligned itself against an idea so widely received in other cultures. She asks:

> Why would the Church go to such lengths to discredit reincarnation? The implicit psychology of reincarnation may be the best explanation. A person who believes in reincarnation assumes responsibility for his own spiritual evolution through rebirth. He does not need priests, confessionals, and rituals to ward off damnation (none of these ideas, incidentally, were part of Jesus' teachings). He needs only to heed his own acts toward himself and others. A belief in reincarnation eliminates the fear of eternal hell that the Church uses to discipline the flock. In other words, reincarnation directly undermines the authority and power of the dogmatic Church.

Carol Bowman has been moved by her love for her children, by her concern for all children, all souls, coming into this life with scars from the past, and by her vision of the opportunity for healing that the modality of recall constantly presents, to make a powerful statement about how we live and how we could live. This is a very profound book for our times.

WONDERFUL WAYS TO LOVE A GRANDCHILD

by Judy Ford
Conari Press
Berkeley, CA $11.95 (paperback)

Reviewed by Ellen Becker

I've read one other of Judy Ford's books and I must admit I was a bit disappointed in this one. Her earlier one, ***Wonderful Ways to Love a Teen ... even when it seems impossible,*** was full of big-hearted love and gritty advice about how to feed and nurture your child through the adolescent years. Her treatment of the subject was satisfying because she didn't set adolescents apart from the rest of the human race as a peculiarity, but treated their difficulties as part of the human condition and called on parents to reach out to them. She doesn't quite manage to pull that off in this book. Here I believe she soft-pedals the true challenge that growing older and being a real person to your children and grandchildren presents in our society, and thereby diminishes this stage of life. Yes, she makes passing reference to our being a youth culture (p. 15), but the whole tone of the book is overly cheery and upbeat at the start and so full of clichés, particularly in the beginning, that it undercuts any message it is trying to convey. It is not until page 34 of her 137-page book, in a portion entitled "Address the Blues," that she begins to deal with any of the tough issues. On this issue of the blues, she doesn't present any solutions, but she acknowledges the problem—and that seems appropriate.

Like her earlier book, this one is a series of two-page pieces of advice organized into three sections, all around the theme of being a grandparent. The sections are entitled "Clarity," "Compassion," and "Courage." The section entitled "Clarity" turns out to be advice about how to grow old gracefully. The advice is good—like: keep in touch with friends, stay involved in the world, enlarge your circle of friends beyond your family—but it is interspersed with other portions that suffer from that over-cheeriness I mentioned, sections like "Let Your Grandness Shine" and "See How Far You've Come."

The second section entitled "Compassion" is my favorite in the book. It's focus is essentially advice on social skills needed for getting along with both generations below you—parents and grandchildren. Even here, however, I believe she is over-invested in "family harmony" as a good without reference to the tough issues that might need tackling between members of the same family. However, this is balanced by advice about dealing with family conflicts, portions entitled "Forgive It All," advising you not to perpetuate long grudges and suggesting how to open up a dialogue, and a section called "Rise Above the Small Stuff," which is very similar but more about owning up to your own shortcomings as a way of moving into better relationships with your family.

She advises things like, tell your grandchildren about your life's story, treat your grandchildren like the individuals they are, when your child gets divorced stay in touch with the divorced spouse, establish a relationship with your daughter or son-in-law, etc. A lot of this advice is about being conscious and working with others' feelings in your different position as the grandparent rather than the parent. However, there does not appear to be any balancing comment about how, as the oldest of the generations, to express feelings to the younger two generations.

The third and final section entitled "Courage" is an amalgam of advice: do this (go see them, spend your money to do so); don't do that (keep from being unkindly critical); seek balance (have a life apart from your children and grandchildren). It has a poignant opening portion about the pain of your children and grandchildren sweeping into and out of your life, entitled "Allow Them to Come and Go." And it has a few nuggets of wisdom I enjoyed reading: "The grandparenting years are a time of reconciliation between your children and you." (p. 99); "Mature unconditional love is the most powerful force in the universe..." (p. 128) And a lovely closing portion about cultivating gratitude as a way of feeling part of the larger universe.

There is one other valuable thing I've seen grandparents do that I did not find in here and that is, act as a mirror for their grandchildren—reflect back to them who they are. Children need this in the same way plants need sunshine and rain—and sometimes, I think, grandparents can see the soul and stage of life of their grandchildren in ways that the parents may not be able to because they are too close to them.

Having said all this, would I recommend this book to read? Yes, because it does a serious job of wrestling with real issues. It just makes some mistakes along the way and falls short of being as magnificent as her earlier book on teens.

THE SILVER PENCIL

by Alice Dalgliesh
Puffin Books,
Published by the Penguin Group, 1944.

Reviewed by Connie Frisbee Houde

This is a story about a young girl, Janet Laidlaw, who lived in Trinidad and traveled all over the world in the books that she read as she was growing up. When her father died her life changed. She had thought she would never leave her home, the West Indies. Suddenly plans are being made for her to attend school in England. Later she moves to America to attend a teachers' training program and settles there. Alice Dalgliesh, the author, (born 1893, died 1979) based this book on her own life as a teacher and writer.

The title for this story comes from an important gift that her father gave her—a silver pencil. She loved to write stories and she felt the silver pencil would bring her good luck. With the death of her father the pencil took on an added dimension of becoming a connection with her father and his love for her storytelling.

What, you might say, is this book doing getting reviewed in *ΣΚΟΛΕ*? Yes, it's a book for young adults—a good example of what one person's life is like growing up and making decisions that form that life. However, more important for this journal is the commentary about her schooling "learning" to become a teacher.

She is taught a teaching method based on Friedrich Froebel, founder of kindergarten. This involves a series of very disciplined and defined games and plans for each day. She has wonderful instincts, a natural ability for telling stories and a love for children and yet she becomes frozen in someone else's methods and "appropriate ways of responding." The morning of her first day of practice teaching she feels great fear and convinces herself that there is nothing to be afraid of. " She was going to teach sweet little children, and behind her stood Froebel with his superior wisdom. Of course there was nothing to be afraid of."

But when problems arise she tries to use the method with little success. As a result Miss Beck her instructor tells her she lacks discipline. Janet finally completes her training thinking that she is prepared to be a teacher.

Her first teaching job was in a Normal School Demonstration kindergarten which utilized newer methods.

> Janet felt as if she had stepped into an entirely unfamiliar country. Virginia had been trained in the newer kindergarten methods—those that had been originated, to a great extent, by a teacher with vision whose name was Patty Smith Hill. Janet remembered that Miss Hill had lectured—once and only once—at her training school, and that Miss Beck had set her lips and made frigid remarks about these strange fly-by-night ideas that wouldn't last.
>
> But they *were* lasting. They were sweeping the kindergartens all over the country. They dominated this particular kindergarten and Janet found herself quite unprepared to meet them. .In this room there was no circle painted on the floor; the children gathered in an informal group. There were no colored balls on strings, or tiny blocks in boxes, such as Froebel had devised. Materials were *big*.... Most important of all, the teachers did not make day-by-day, week-by-week plans for the children. They followed the children's own interests, helped them to work these interests out in the best way. Janet was very much mystified by it all and felt herself inadequate....The only thing that was the same was storytelling—Janet clung to that as the survivor from a sinking ship clings to a raft. But the raft was small and the waves washed over her.

Until she meets another individual who can see her potential Janet flounders in her teaching. She knows something is wrong but takes all the blame upon herself for not being a good teacher and feels she should give up and do something else. At one point when Janet is feeling particularly down and is confiding in a friend, she is given the exact advice she needs. "The whole trouble is you have no confidence in yourself. You've got to find that, somehow, because you'll never be any good until you do."

It is Janet's struggle to learn to accept her own inner wisdom and to set aside the "guru" Froebel who was supposed to have all the answers about how to teach. Once she had done that, which was by no means easy, she became a good teacher enjoying what she knew she was doing well.

I found this book to be a mirror for almost any profession or position in life—a possible guide to learning to find your own way. I could identify with Janet's struggle to unlearn what were supposed to be the answers. How many of us have had to unlearn what we have learned in school before we could really begin to take off on our own with satisfaction and success?

OH BOY, OH BOY, OH BOY!
Confronting Motherhood, Womanhood & Selfhood in a Household of Boys
by Karin Kasdin

1997 - ISBN 0-9638327-9-4 - $14.95
Sybil Publications
Giving Voice to Women
Portland, OR 97201

Reviewed by Mary M. Leue

I gotta tell you! Having grown up in a family of six kids, four of whom were boys, and having had four boys of my own in a clan of five, I know the "song" Karin Kasdin sings in this marvelous little book as though I had written it myself! Only, if I had tried to do it, it wouldn't have exuded the same, totally authentic enjoyment, humor, candidness, *realness* of this one—because I suffered from too much ambivalence and doubt to jump into life as Karin has into hers. The loveliest thing about his book is her unspoken offering to the reader to sing along with her. She does it so gracefully, so naturally that one has to step back to realize she's been doing it! How I wish I'd had her spirit as a companion along the way, because women love to make comparisons, *need* to make comparisons between their own inner lives and behavioral patterns and those of their sisters! Just a look at her face inside the back cover tells you an encyclopedia-full of inside dope about this lady Karin! God bless her mother and father, her female peers, her husband and her three irrepressible sons! God bless her own bouncy, irreverent, self-nourishing self! Her humorous, wry self-acceptance as a woman just as she is is totally healing! She understands *real* boyhood as I remember it from my own childhood, and as I lived it with my own sons! No, I didn't have the wit and poise to play the role as fully as she has and does, but I know a star when I meet one, and she's the real thing!

Here's what her publisher, Miriam Selby, says about her book:

> When I started reading the manuscript for *Oh Boy, Oh Boy, Oh Boy!*, I laughed uproariously. Karin Kasdin's descriptions of her boys' belching contests, being homebound during a blizzard, and caring for a pet frog are hilarious. By the epilogue I was actually choking back tears. Evoking

such a range of emotions is a true gift. This book will resonate with all mothers.

Miriam adds that the book will be in second edition by Christmas. Oh, I hope so! This lady is a one-person antidote to the whole ADD, ADHD syndrome, in my opinion! In the chapter entitled, "I Can Do Anything Better Than You. And I Do," Karin describes a gender difference between herself and her four males which, by inference, could help account for both the growth of Home- and other alternative patterns of schooling *and* the equally phenomenal growth of the use of these (mainly) boy-controlling chemicals in public school classrooms! Most elementary-school teachers are women, most principals and superintendents are men! Most of the family members delegated to the task of monitoring their children's school participation are women! Most PTA members, supposedly the guardians of children's schools, are women! Karin says of herself and her males,

> All four of my men say I'm not competitive enough. I give up too easily. They may be right. I'm sure it's not because I'm a woman, but because I'm me that I'm unable to experience the exhilaration of a hard-won fight. I can't even be competitive with myself. I stop exercising before the endorphins kick in. In fact, I'm not sure I *have* endorphins. It's not that I'm not a fighter. I think my battles have been quiet, invisible ones. I pick them or they pick me carefully, and I fight valiantly but without a lot of noise or action. Not so with my three little hellions who greet each new day as a new opportunity to score points, gain leverage, take the lead and emerge victorious by sundown.

Yes. She picks her fights! My fantasy is that it a teacher were so rash as to suggest that one of her sons be put on a Ritalin schedule, she'd be there fighting for him like a tigress, because she LOVES MALES! In my opinion, it's too easy for parents who allow their sons to be controlled by Ritalin in school to blame their child for their *own* failure to defy the state's compulsory system that puts the "blame" for the "problem" on boys with enough energy, intelligence or rebelliousness to react in an anti-social behavior pattern of one sort or another that disrupts the calm of the classroom that so many teachers love! Among other things, this system, by its very nature, pits the "male" way of being against the "female" way—boys against girls, male children against female adults both in school and out!—and, as so often in our society, women are given the role of carrying out male-defined goals. Neither gender wins.

Karin's way of living with her males through all the love, enjoyment, humor, understanding and exasperation entailed is all too rare a commodity in a mother! She takes this fact for granted, as, for example, her account of her sons' awareness of menstruation makes clear. The chapter is called, "I Menstruate. They don't.":

> Today was just another day in the fourth grade. Chris Sanderson was punished for selling photographic excerpts from his sister's diary to all his friends who have siblings her age. Ryan Schwartz won the science contest for eating bugs and not dying. And my son Andrew informed his class that I had my period. Peter Pataski practically puked up his peanut butter and marshmallow sandwich because it was so disgusting--not the sandwich, my period.
>
> Andrew doesn't usually do things that could get him into trouble with the authorities. I think he was perplexed that some of the kids hadn't learned all about menstruation from their mothers. He expected the uneducated to be grateful to him for taking time out from lunch to demonstrate the physiological details by spooning his Campbell's Tomato Soup into a napkin as a visual aid.
>
> I'll be getting calls tonight. Six or seven mothers will phone to say, "My son (or daughter) heard the most amusing biology lecture from your son today, and I thought I'd call just to make you aware of the information your child is disseminating to his peers because I'm sure he didn't hear it from you." There will be a long pause while each of these mothers silently adds, "you liberal, pro-choice, gay sympathizing, anti-family values, feminist democrat!" I will promise to get to the bottom of it, hang up, and finish the fat-free hot fudge, chocolate chip, peanut butter cup brownie ice cream (whoops, yogurt) sundae that my doctor prescribed for cramping.
>
> I don't mind that the boys know about my period. I'm glad my liberal, pro-choice, gay sympathizing, anti-family values, feminist democrat husband explained it to them. After all, unjustifiable but ingenious and torturous forms of mental and physical punishment, sporadic periods of acute dementia, and complete and heartless withdrawal of affection are monthly facts of life in our house...

Women have been taught to hide the evidence of their menstrual periods from public awareness. Like so many women's vehemently-expressed horror at the use of verbal obscenity—especially the use of the f-word—we have been trained to maintain a "standard" of public behavior for our children based on a myth about gentility that, in a society as governed by acceptance of cruelty, violence and anti-individualism as ours is actually largely a form of denial. The susceptibility of young girls to being programmed by such "standards" is very powerful, as Jane Tompkins' book, *A Life in School; What the Teacher Learned* (see review in *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, Volume XIV, #2, pp. 112-115), makes painfully clear! It's hard to say which gender is more seriously damaged by this kind of programming. Both are, but in very different ways.

I doubt that Karin's boys would ever be candidates for Ritalin because they've been exposed to *real life*, right from the first moment of conception—which teaches children how to live with "the politics of experience" (to use R.D. Laing's useful expression)—teaches them the "art of the possible." My theory about Ritalin kids is that they have the kinds of temperament that make capitulation to an unfair, confining system just about impossible while at the same time virtually ensures that they will go on *trying* to express their rebellion against conformity in ways guaranteed to irk the teacher beyond the limits of her tolerance. Most girls are too "savvy" or too chicken to let this happen, so it happens mostly to boys. No one is to blame for this underground battle, this "Mexican standoff" between individuals and the system, between males and females—but defining it incorrectly just about guarantees that it will get worse, not better!

Hey, get this book, enjoy its deliciousness, pass it on to your other long-suffering woman friends who are mothers! But get it!

RAISING KIDS WITH JUST A LITTLE CASH

by Lisa Reid

Ferguson-Carol Publishers
Santa Fe, NM 87501
1996, $12.95

Reviewed by Nancy Ost

I'm going to get right to the point—this is a book that every family ought to have in their book collection right beside those dog-eared, food-stained often-used cookbooks. Aware of the consumer-based culture in which we live, where parents spend more money and expend more time and energy than ever in order to provide what appears to be the necessary essentials for their children, Lisa Reid has done an outstanding job of providing us with a guidebook full of ideas and philosophies with which to counter this need to spend so much hard-earned cash!

In this easy-to-use and read handbook (I scanned all 165 pages in one hour), Lisa provides ideas for cutting costs of clothing for your children from birth through their teens. Her ideas range from simple, quick suggestions to those that will require more thought, energy and planning-ahead. Throughout the entire book one feels encouraged to implement one simple idea and to grow from there.

Lisa talks about the "toy" dilemma—how to find inexpensive ones, how to acquire and use second-hand ones, how to deal with too many. Her real-life examples are interspersed with delightful humor to which every parent will be able to relate. In the chapters on **Entertainment and Education, Birthdays** and **Holidays** Lisa gives us a plethora of creative alternatives to spending a lot of money in order to "make our kids happy." And every chapter concludes with a list of resources so parents can continue on their own to find money-saving ideas that will work for them.

Throughout her pages of family-tested ideas, Lisa also includes supportive and thought-provoking comments from wise teachers like Henry David Thoreau—*I was rich in sunny hours and summer days, and I spent them lavishly.* Her comment from Mary Pipher, author of *Reviving Ophelia,* causes us to rethink some of the emotional negatives of our consumer-based culture. *Advertising teaches that pain can be handled by buying and consuming products. There's big money to be made in creating wants and then encouraging that these wants are needs, even rights.*

Lisa has success stories from families who have decided to make changes in their families' spending habits. One mother expresses the profound learning she has seen for her kids. "The level of self-control necessary to be successfully thrifty creates self-reliance and self-esteem in kids."

As a teacher of elementary-aged kids, I find many of Lisa's creative ideas inspiring and look forward to using them with my students. As a mother of four and as a working single-parent, I find Lisa's ideas encouraging and do-able. Even though our household is already thrift-based due to low-income, this book has provided me with more ideas with which to approach the upcoming holiday season. Thank you, Lisa!

JUST FOR FUN

...Once again, two gems gleaned from my e-mail jokenet—in this instance, Josh Hornick:

Some messages are worth reading again. JH:

SWAMI BEYONDANANDA'S GUIDELINES FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

1. Be a Fundamentalist—make sure the Fun always comes before the Mental. Realize that life is a situation comedy that will never be cancelled. A laugh track has been provided, and the reason why we are put in the material world is to get more material. Have a good laughsitive twice a day, and that will ensure regularhilarity.

2. Remember that each of us has been given a special gift—just for entering. So you are already a winner!

3. The most powerful tool on the planet today is Tell-A-Vision. That is where I tell a vision to you, and you tell a vision to me. That way, if we don't like the programming we're getting, we can change the channel.

4. Life is like photography. You use the negative to develop. And no matter what adversity you face, be reassured: of course God loves you.—He's just not ready to make a commitment.

5. It is true. As we go through life thinking heavy thoughts, thought particles tend to get caught between the ears, causing a condition called truth decay. So be sure to use mental floss twice a day. And when you're tempted to practice tantrum yoga, remember what we teach in Swami's Absurdiveness Training class: "Don't get even, get odd."

6. If we want world peace, we must let go of our attachments and truly live like nomads. That's where I no mad at you, you no mad at me. That way, there'll surely be nomadness on the planet. And peace begins with each of us. A little peace here, a little peace there, pretty soon all the peaces will fit together to make one big peace everywhere.

7. I know great earth changes have been predicted for the future, so if you're looking to avoid earthquakes, my advice is simple. When you find a fault, just don't dwell on it.

8. There's no need to change the world. All we have to do is toilet-train the world and we'll never have to change it again.

9. If you're looking to find the key to the Universe, I have some bad news and some good news. The bad news is—there is no key to the Universe. The good news is—it has been left unlocked.

10. Finally, everything I have told you is channelled. That way, if you don't like it, it's not my fault. And remember, enlightenment is not a bureaucracy. So you don't have to go through channels.

COMPUTER CAMP

Dear Mr. Dvorak:

Ann Landers wouldn't print this. I have nowhere else to turn. I have to get the word out. Warn other parents. It's about my son, Billy. He's always been a good, normal ten-year-old boy. Last spring we sat down to select a summer camp for Billy. We sorted through brochures for camps with swimming, canoeing, games, singing by the campfire—you know. There were sports camps and camps for weight reduction, music, military camps, camps that specialized in Tibetan knot tying. I tried to talk him into Camp Winnepoopoo. It's where he went last year. (He made an adorable picture out of painted pinto beans and macaroni). Billy would have none of it. He pulled a brochure out of his pocket for a COMPUTER CAMP! We should have put our foot down right there, if only we had known.

He left three weeks ago. I don't know what's happened. He's changed. I can't explain it. See for yourself. These are some of my little Billy's letters.

Dear Mom,

The kids are dorky nerds. The food stinks. The computers are the only good part. We're learning how to program. Late at night is the best time to program, so they let us stay up.

Love, Billy.

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Dear Mom,

Camp is O.K. Last night we had pizza in the middle of the night. We all get to choose what we want to drink. I drink Classic Coke. By the way, can you make Szechuan food? I'm getting used to it now. Gotta go, it's time for the flowchart class.

Love, Billy.

P.S. This is written on a word processor. Pretty swell, huh? It's spellchecked too.

Dear Mom,

Don't worry. We do regular camp stuff. We told ghost stories by the glow of the green computer screens. It was real neat. I don't have much of a tan 'cause we don't go outside very often. You can't see the computer screen in the sunlight anyway. That wimp camp I went to last year fed us weird food too. Lay off, Mom. I'm okay, really.

Love, Billy

Dear Mom,

I'm fine. I'm sleeping enough. I'm eating enough. This is the best camp ever. We scared the counselor with some phony worm code. It was real funny. He got mad and yelled. Frederick says it's okay. Can you send more money? I spent mine on a pocket protector and a box of blank diskettes. I've got to chip in on the phone bill. Did you know that you can talk to people on a computer? Give my regards to Dad.

Love, Billy.

Dear Mother,

Forget the money for the telephone. We've got a way to not pay. Sorry I haven't written. I've been learning a lot. I'm real good at getting onto any computer in the country. It's really easy! I got into the university's in less than fifteen minutes. Frederick did it in five, he's going to show me how. Frederick is my bunk partner. He's really smart. He says that I shouldn't call myself Billy anymore. So, I'm not.

Signed, William.

Dear Mother,

How nice of you to come up on Parents Day. Why'd you get so upset? I haven't gained that much weight. The glasses aren't real. Everybody wears them. I was trying to fit in. Believe me, the tape on them is cool. I thought that you'd be proud of my program. After all, I've made some money on it. A publisher is sending a check for $30,000. Anyway, I've paid for the next six weeks of camp. I won't be home until late August.

Regards, William.

Mother,

Stop treating me like a child. True—physically I am only ten years old. It was silly of you to try to kidnap me. Do not try again. Remember, I can make your life miserable (i.e., the bank, credit bureau, and government computers). I am not kidding. O.K.? I won't write again and this is your only warning. The emotions of this interpersonal communication drain me.

Sincerely, William.

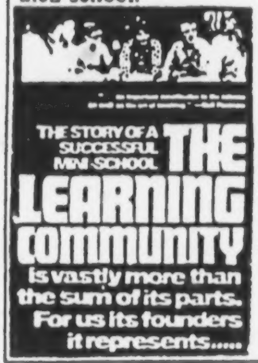
* * * * * * * *

See what I mean? It's been two weeks since I've heard from my little boy. What can I do, Mr.Dvorak? I know that it's probably too late to save my little Billy. But, if by printing these letters you can save JUST ONE CHILD from a life of programming, please, I beg of you to do so. Thank you very much.

Sally Gates, Concerned Parent

The Learning Community:
the Story of a Successful Mini-school
by James Penha and John Azrak

Long out of print, this book tells the story of five high school teachers who successfully create an alternative "school-within-a-school. It is filled with the reflections of both the teachers and the students of how they created a caring atmosphere of community in their school.


THE STORY OF A SUCCESSFUL MINI-SCHOOL
THE LEARNING COMMUNITY
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—Jerry Mintz

"This book comes just in time...I congratulate the authors. They might not realize it, but they have made and important contribution to the science as well as the art of teaching." —Neil Postman

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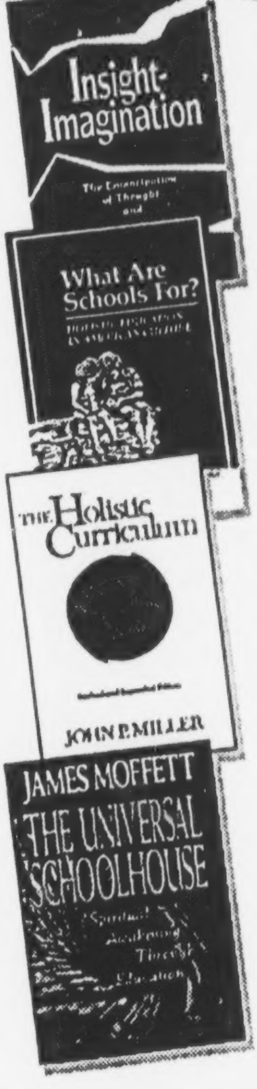

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JUST FOR FUN

...... AND MORE ......

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

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DEDICATION:

TO REAL TEACHERS EVERYWHERE

Increasingly we are discovering how much of the electrifying material we are privileged to publish comes from the hands of inspired and inspiring teachers who are working in their profession at their chosen level, through their chosen medium, by their chosen means. A few, like our beloved John Gatto and Jonathan Kozol, have had to drop out of the role of active classroom teacher in order to work fulltime on writing and speaking in public, so urgent is their sense of crisis in what our society is doing to families and to the coming generation!

Some, like Chris Mercogliano, Orin Domenico and John Potter are still struggling for the time and opportunity to combine teaching and writing. A few, having completed their life's work, have gone before us, like Elizabeth and Alexis Ferm of the Stelton School, leaving their writings behind. Others like John Lawry, Jane Tompkins, Carlos Bonilla, Alan Bonsteel and Robert Kastelic are toiling in the vineyards of academia, where the stresses are different but equally real, and where the damage to the lives of students is becoming clearer every day!

We dedicate this issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ to these gifted people, and to all the others who have sent and will send us their thoughts and dreams!! We welcome them as contributors to this periodical, and, taught by our friend from the nearby Buddhist Peace Pagoda, Jun-anji-san Yasuda, a Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist nun, we say to all of them, Na mu myo ho ren ge kyo. Bow three times to you, palms together!

The Live-out is happening again!

July 25 through August 1

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND, THE "RAG-TAG ARMY OF THE GUERRILLA CURRICULUM" ARE ONCE AGAIN GATHERING AT JOURNEY'S END FARM IN ASHFIELD, MASSACUHUSETTS TO LEARN, SHMOOZE, EXCHANGE, LIVE AND PLAY TOGETHER, BOND, ENJOY OUR KIDS AS THEY DO THEIR OWN BONDING AND LEARNING NATURALLY - AS KIDS DO WHEN WE GIVE THEM THE CHANCE.

Be there! We need you!
Call, write, fax or e-mail us for a more detailed description, a registration form and directions to get there.

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e-mail MarySKOLE@aol.com
OR Nancyfrees@aol.com

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

This issue is so filled with stellar contributions from wonderful teachers that it begins with a dedication to teachers everywhere. And a good thing it is, too, because of the bad news they report! We're devoting a lot of space to the increasingly frightening phenomenon known as ADD/ADHD, the reification and control of which are quite evidently assuming epidemic proportions, both in North America and abroad! In the Community School's report you will find Em Pariser's comments on this issue which he calls "Attention and Deficit," starting on page xiv. Two segments from Chris Mercogliano's upcoming book tentatively entitled *RID-A-HIM* head the article section pp. 1-23, and following this one is an authoritative report by an English MD, Dr. Edward Hamlyn, entitled "Childhood as Disease," pp. 24-5, plus reviews by Chris of two books written by American PhDs, pp. 26-32.

As these writers on the subject of ADD point out, we have fallen so far into the mode of thinking promoted by the various control institutions to which families are exposed, including the medical, educational, legal and governmental systems—plus the vast majority of media images and views offered consumers by the popular press, TV and radio (even including Public Radio)—that, as the generations who were less deeply influenced by them have aged and died off, these cultural myths have acquired an aura of reality among far too many medically naive, frightened parents—which is itself a very frightening phenomenon! It's like a bad dream from which we are having a heck of a time awakening!

The rest of this issue is less specifically targeted, but a lot of the material which appears here rounds out a pretty bleak picture of the current status of the American school system and the kids who go there We have reports from teachers at typical public high schools and colleges that sound pretty bad—a substitute teacher's bewilderment with his students' behavior (in the Special Readers' Section); Jane Tompkins' report of the nay-saying comments and questions asked by academicians in workshops in which she is suggesting we loosen up our ways of teaching college students; Orin Domenico's report of the deadness of professional teaching; John Taylor Gatto's "Institutional Schooling Must be Destroyed"; Carlos Bonilla and Alan Bonsteel's report on the misleading statistics of high school dropout rates; and, on a broader scale, James Prescott's summary of the findings of a wide variety of sources on the current status of the American family, taken from *TouchThe Future.*

The good news appears in the suggested remedies for our ills inherent in Chris Mercogliano's narratives on the transformation of erstwhile Ritalin kids in an atmosphere of freedom and wise guidance; Chapter II of Elizabeth Byrne Ferm's *Freedom in Education,* addressing as it does prevention or cure through recognizing and practicing a model of childhood which clearly spells out the entire range of "normal" childhood, not just the Bowdlerized version of it that so often passes for its reality; Bob Kastelic's summary of the data on various kinds of learning styles cutting through the myths concerning teaching as needing to follow a monolithic pathway; John Lawry's review of *The Way of Council* by Zimmerman and Coyle as a powerful means of developing communication and community-building; Dave Harrison's review of the book by Bonilla and Bonsteel, *A Choice for our Children,* as well as Emanuel Pariser's invitation to a conference outlining the results and the promise of the Charter School movement; Josh Hornick's review of Grace Llewellyn's classic, *The Teenage Liberation Handbook;* and Brian Ray's latest study of homeschooling, originally reported in *Growing Without Schooling.*

We hope that *ΣΚΟΛΕ* and the *Journal of Family Life* function as wakeup calls for the slumberers in our midst! And they do seem play that role for an increasing number of readers! Also, *Challenging the Giant,* the 3-volume anthology taken from *ΣΚΟΛΕ* over the years, is for sale on-line at both Barnes & Noble and Amazon on the net, and we're getting quite a few orders—but not that many institutional subscriptions! We include the results of the questionnaire Barb Lundgren did for us, which are very heartening—but the pipeline to our academic institutions is much too narrow! What we most want is to be on the shelves of libraries. Yes, we're in a few of them, but we need to be in a lot more. Quite a few of our readers tell us that they give their old copies to their local school or library. If more of you would do that, we could have more influence!

Periodicals are hard for libraries to add because they are lifelong items in their limited budgets—so, even though we are already in a number of all three varieties of library, we find it very hard to make contact with most of them, even though we've tried in a number of ways. What we have done in a few instances that worked was to find a sympathetic librarian or teacher who was willing to shelve our journal(s) in a public, university or school library nearby.

So if you can do that, and then send us the name of that contact person and the address of the library (that's very important), we will send them a complimentary subscription! Of course, if you'd like to send us a check for the sub ($30/year for an institutional sub), as one reader has done, that would be super, but we can carry it free even if you don't. So your help would be very valuable! As an incentive, for every library subscription you get to take on *ΣΚΟΛΕ,* we'll send a year's subscription as a free gift to the friend of your choice (please remind us when you send the gift sub!)!

? True or False:

Homeschoolers don't have access to group experiences.

Read **Growing Without Schooling** magazine's recent features on homeschoolers' sports teams, theater groups, music groups, folk dancing groups, book discussion groups, teenagers' study groups, writing groups, and environmental groups and you decide.

GWS, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140.
Subscriptions $25/yr; back issues $6 each or $3 each for subscribers. You can order back issues with any of the features listed above.

SPECIAL READERS' SECTION

We start off with the éclat of a letter from Big John Gatto kindly but tellingly refuting Ron Miller's belief that he is a believer in conspiracy theory:

Letter to the Editor:

Having written some very graceful and charming fairy tales about certified secular holy men like Pestalozzi, Froebel, Rousseau and John Dewey, I'm not surprised Ron Miller typecast me in his pantheon as a prophet and conspiracy theorist in the excellent interview published in *ΣΚΟΛΕ* last month. I do like the prophets, especially Ezekiel, but I'm really not worthy to carry their sandals, so I have to waive the title lest I disappoint the fire and brimstone crowd of academic school reformers with my (merely) hot air.

What I really am, Ron, is an angry guy lonely for the steelworkers and coal miners of western Pennsylvania he grew up around, men (and women in cotton housedresses) who knew what heroes and heroines looked like, knew what really mattered, and were willing to fight for it, even in a losing cause. I miss the honesty of ordinary lives, living it as I do in PhD-infested new York City at the end of days. Anyway, my own calculus isn't nearly as simplistic as Ron's reduction of it.

I like Ron and the generosity of his spirit and intelligence too much to want to beat up on him—we probably would agree on everything important including beer (although I do think he should cut back on the drinking and stop beating his wife)—but as long as he insists on plucking the Hegelian/Marxist string on his lute, the one that sounds the melody that vast and awesome "forces" (other than God) are driving history, forces which use men and women as mortal dress and hence partially exculpate their deeds, then those of us who love him are duty-bound for his own good to engage him in argument—pointing out the Oriental fatalism in that point of view, one of the classical heresies (although which one, I've forgotten and would be most grateful to any reader for enlightenment).

When 6-15,000 men (mostly) hold about 85% of all work in their hands, control all significant academic research through foundations, corporate grants and government dispensations and other kinds of preferment, own the channels of public information through 23 well-known conglomerates (doesn't Ron read Chomsky, also an intellectual?), live together in walled and gated compounds, intermarry as if the evolutionary breeding stock depended on it, own all the bombs, germs and deadly gases, how much clearer does the catastrophe which infantilizes the other six billion of us have to get before Ron opens his eyes far enough to see the human culpability in the equation? Men and women *deliberately* build and maintain the systems, a *few* do, that is. It is quite true—and indeed is the central thesis of my next book *THE EMPTY CHILD, A Schoolteacher's Intuition*—that once the systems reach a certain critical mass they become autonomous. We are in that bind now, every Afghan, Turk, Italian and noble Serb among us, and the only way out is absolutely guaranteed not to be pretty since there is no known instance in civilized history where a concentration peacefully attenuated itself.

Ron may hope sincerely that his custodians really are Plato's selfless guardians, momentarily bemused but certain to come to their senses, but that's because, like many intellectuals, he stops short of pushing the logic of liberal positivism or scientific evolutionary theory to its implacable—and very logical—conclusion. I prefer not to be willing to send anyone gently into that good night, or go there myself. I make sense out of my life from a different story. And from reading *ΣΚΟΛΕ*.

Does all this mean that there is a grand conspiracy out there? Hell, no, the bastards are amazingly open about what they've been up to for the past 200 years. You don't want to believe Calvin? Hey, they'll give you Archbishop Laud. Can't stomach Laud? Try Malthus. Malthus too strong for your weak stomach? Here comes Darwin. Darwin too flimsy to bear any hostile scrutiny? Let's go with the rational genius of Galton, Dewey, Thorndike, Watson, Gaylord Simpson, right down to Stephen J. Gould and Howard Gardner. Open your eyes, Ron, they're all the same mind, just different masks.

Nothing I've said is meant to suggest any "conspiracy"—all you need to comprehend what's happened and happening is a realistic view of human nature, a blessing denied Pestalozzi and Co. who served the Prussian state better than they could ever realize. I personally find that western religion (not churches and synagogues) has provided the insight we need for millennia. The theological mind sees much more profoundly than any of the shallow "psychologies" do today, at least it does to anyone who spends the time to translate its idiom.

Hey, that's my story, and I'm sticking to it. I just sent five dollars to the Paula Jones defense fund; she's carrying the banner for the rest of us along with Tara Lipinski and Michelle Kwan, who showed us recently what kids are capable of who don't follow the prophets of schooling. I have to go now, I'm part of a conspiracy to bring the house down (any way we can) and it keeps me busy.

Love to all. I mean that.
John, a dedicated conspirator
(John Taylor Gatto)

* * * * *

This letter to the editor appeared in AERO-GRAMME #23, *Jerry Mintz's networking periodical, now in magazine format! It was written in response to Sheryl McCarthy's article, "We Need to Make Better Use of the School Day," in* Newsday. *Setting the record straight is only one of the valuable functions Jerry's* AERO *performs, and #23, which is now available on line, is the best so far! Congratulations, Jerry!:*

Longer School Year not the Answer

by Jerry Mintz

Dear Sheryl:

I'm sure your heart is in the right place, but your article on year-round school and the use of the school day is rife with assumptions which are not borne out by fact.

Assumption #1: That the Japanese have a good school system. The reality is that the Japanese system is so brutal to kids that there are over 180,000 "school refusers," children who have been so traumatized by school, who are so school phobic, that there is no way to get them there. In the face of this, dozens of alternative schools are beginning to pop up, and people are even beginning to talk about homeschooling. A recent feature story in the *Japan Times* highlighted this new phenomenon.

Assumption #2: That going to school longer will make students learn more. The reality is that the basic approach being used by public schools today is as antiquated as the summer break to harvest the crops. More of that would likely make things worse rather than better. The current system extinguishes chrldren's innate need to learn, making them passive non-learners.

Homeschoolers have learned that two hours a day of good learning experiences is enough to let their kids leapfrog over students slogging in unresponsive schools. Witness the Colfax family in California, who raised their children on a goat farm with only two hours of schooling a day. Their three oldest all went to Harvard, and the oldest went on to Harvard Medical School and is a practicing doctor now. The AVERAGE homeschooler in the country now is in the 85th percentile academically. Over a million children are currently homeschooling.

Charter schools have grown from only five a few years ago to over 750 now. At least 29 states have passed charter legislation.

Why are these alternatives growing so rapidly? Because the current system is unfunctional for most children! If your kids hate school, listen to them! Kids are natural learnings, as brain research has shown. So something must be wrong with their school.

And please do not think that this is a political issue. Not only are religious right-wingers talking about alternatives, but black inner-city Democrats and others along the whole political spectrum are pushing for alternatives such as vouchers and other educational choices.

I know of one democratic alternative school where the students regularly choose to abolish the vacations and have a rule which says they can't stay after school unless they are good! Yes, that's how to lengthen the school year and the school day, not by dishing out more of the same failed system!

You may contact Jerry at 1-800-769-4171, fax him at 516-625-3257 or contact him via e-mail at jmintz@igc.apc.org—and you may visit his website at www.speakeasy.org/~aero

* * * * *

Here's Barb Lundgren's survey of ΣΚΟΛΕ *readers. Our thanks to Barbara, and to everyone who responded:*

Dear Mary Chris, Larry,

I've just completed the tabulation and analysis on *ΣΚΟΛΕ* readers. Here goes:

Eighteen people in total responded. The reader profile looks like this:

The reader is middle-aged (44), a parent of older children, average age of 20. S/he is actively involved in education and has been, for over seven years, generally in either an alternative school setting or home/unschool. S/he is anti-public school in philosophy, equally supportive of free, home, un- or self-schooled approaches In education. Her/his children have been or are currently schooled in either alternative or home/un- school settings. S/he loves *ΣΚΟΛΕ,* reads it cover to cover, shares it with others and keeps it in her/his library. She is an avid reader. subscribing to three or more other educational publications as well as many other non-educational ones, in addition to books of all types. She is comfortable financially and will spend her/his discretionary income, in order, as follows: education, books, kids, vacations, music, home improvements, entertainment, pampering oneself, household furnishings.

The following represents actual responses to the questions 'What do you like about *ΣΚΟΛΕ*?", "What don't you like about *ΣΚΟΛΕ* ?", "What do you want to see in *ΣΚΟΛΕ* ?", "What books have influenced you?" and "What else do you read? (I included the edu. pub. in here):

16. **What do you like?**

Wide range of articles, the "personness", lengthy, in-depth articles and interviews (3), variety, the friendly homey down-to-earth feeling, Mr. Gatto (4), Politics, sense ot humor, respect for kids, alternative perspective (4). articles on edu. philosophy, the freedom to learn what you want, you are doing a great job. provides a voice much needed and much unlike other educ journals, the long in-depth articles on education, the ads., book reviews (2), scope of alternative approaches to cducation, conversational tone, the *person*ality, the quirkiness, the grit, updates on other schools, down to earth. helps support my school, personal format, a needed publication because no one else is documenting this stuff!, the small size, informal and meaningful artlcles, cover design, not stuffy, "academic" but useful and provoking, it keeps presenting me with an alternative voice to what I am surrounded by day in and day out.

17. **What don't you like?**

You leave out ads that are submitted and paid for, it's starting to look like the *Journal*, which is too much anti-west multiculturalism. America was "invaded" by evil white Europeans who exploited the Native American flower children who lived in harmony with nature and each other... you get my drift. I'm sorry but Mario Cuomo is NOT my idea ot a great politician. There should be more conservative/Libertarian articles, like those by John Gatto, poor production values (hard to read), too much to read—I'd like 1-3 choice articles, info/articles on very young, not published enough times per year, typeface, layout (but don't change it), photos to break up the type, resolution is so-so, the name spelled in Greek, graphically it's not pleasing - the way it's bound makes it hard to hold open and read, esp. since the words go so close to the bound rnargin, what's not to like?

18. **What do you want?**

More stories about innovative, exciting things folks are doing, book excerpts, more interviews, more of the same and other cultures (non-white), lower your ad rates, more how to's, suggestions tor teaching, strategies for institutional and personal change. advice from youth, adult education, more on unschooling and homeschooling, continue to explore alternatives, book review, students on education, that public education is bankrupt, how alternative schools have worked through hard challenges, maybe some question and answer forum, stories from schools/non-schools, E-comics.

20. **Books**

Summerhill (4)
Free Schools
Freedom & Beyond
Deschooling Society
What Are We Trying to Teach Them Anyway? by Ronald Pierce
Educating the Entire Person, by Ron Dultz
My Life as a Traveling Homeschooler, by Jenifer Goldman
Death at an Early Age, by Jonathan Kozol
Dumbing Us Down, by Gatto (2),
Education and Ecstasy. by George Leonard
The Underachieving School, by Holt
Separating School and State, by Sheldon Richman
The Creative Classroom, by Henry Beechold

Teaching as a Subversive Activity (2) and The School Book, by
Neil Postman
How Schools Fail

* * * * *

Here's a questionnaire sent to us by Professor Jane Tompkins from the English Department at Duke University, a review of whose fine book, A Life in School, or What the Teacher Learned, *was reviewed in the Spring, 1997 issue of* ΣΚΟΛΕ. *I know she means it, and would appreciate hearing from you:*

DUKE UNIVERSITY
Department of English
Box 90015
Durham, North Carolina 27708
Tel. (919) 684-2741; Fax (919) 684-4871

Dear Mary:

I'm writing to ask you for a favor. I've enclosed a list of the questions people ask, or objections they make all the time when I give talks or workshops on student-centered, process-oriented learning and teaching. I want to write an article that answers some or all of them in ways that address both the surface of the question and the issues that underlie them.

To do this, I need the help of people who are experienced in non-authoritarian teaching and have thought about the pros and cons.

Would you be willing to jot down your answers to any of the questions you can speak to and send them to me? I don't do e-mail, but I'm looking for an e-mail type reply: spontaneous, off-the-cuff. I'm not looking for polished prose, or for anything that would be onerous and time-consuming for you. Just whatever comes to mind, from the wisdom you!ve gained over the years.

I will be extremely grateful for anything you have to say.

Sincerely,
Jane Tompkins

http://www.duke.edu/web/english/

BUT...

1. You can do this sort of teaching with Duke students, who are smart and well prepared, but not with our students.

2. You can use these teaching methods in humanities courses, where there's lots of room for discussion and interpretation, but not in----------, where there's a body of material that has to be covered in a certain amount of time.

3. (a variation of 2) Maybe this kind of teaching works when there's nothing at stake but ideas, but I wouldn't want to be operated on by a brain surgeon who had trained in your kind of classroom.

4. You can do this in a seminar course of ten to twenty students, but not in courses of thirty or more—and especially not in lecture courses of two to four hundred.

5. You can do this in advanced courses where the students already know the vocabulary of the discipline? but not in introductory courses where they don't even know what the terms and problems are and lack basic information.

6. You can teach this way if you're a tenured full professor who has already established her scholarly reputation and teaches at a prestigious university, but not if you're a high school teacher / a graduate teaching assistant / adjunct faculty / an assistant professor / untenured / not yet a full professor / not well-known / not teaching at Duke.

7. You can do this because you know what techniques to use to get students talking, but I don't know how (and I'm too old/scared/busy/low on the totem pole to try). (People never say this, of course, but I hear it behind what they're saying)

8. You seem to be satisfied with the results of your teaching on a psychological level, but are the students really learning anything?
9. This kind of teaching sounds great but what about evaluation? Where I teach, we have to give grades.

10. This kind of teaching may work well in and of itself but how do you assess its efficacy in a way that provides hard data to the administrators and legislators who decide whether to fund it or not?

11. Can you think of objections I haven't listed here? If so, I'd love to hear them (well, you know what I mean).

Here are excerpts from the annual report of the Community School in Camden, Maine, with whose co-Director Emanuel Pariser we have been friends and correspondents for many years! Em has sent us several articles on many aspects of the school, students' writings from their newsletter and past years' annual report. We offer this report in the hope that our readers will get inspiration for finding creative ways of working with kids, especially kids for whom it may be a "school of last resort."

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL, CAMDEN, MAINE

Board News from President Chris Shrum:

The Community School's twenty-fourth year was a year of transitions and challenges. We saw the resignation of two valued and committed Board members, Peter Sexton and Helen Levathes. Peter and Helen dedicated thirteen and six years to the Board respectively. Their service to the Community School was exemplary and they will be missed.

The staff also found themselves in flux with Nancy Bouffard, Scott Patterson, and Julie Shanahan moving on, accepting new challenges away from the Community School. Each played a pivotal role in the success of the School and we wish them continued success in their new endeavors. However, as a result the School has welcomed Avery Larned, Director of the Passages (Teen Parent) Program and former counselor at Hurricane Island, and Laurie Dunleavey, Operations Manager. The youngest member of the School is Jen Crandall's son Conor, born 1/5/97. Jen will be taking a six-month leave of absence beginning in September and we look forward to her return in the spring.

...With the growing success of three very unique programs, the Residential Program, Passages, and Outreach, the C-School's overall identity has been changing. Recognizing this, the Board is committed to integrating the programs more fully, creating shared activities across the programs, exploring the option of joint graduations, and providing much needed support for Passages' counselors. Consolidating the programs will require providing shared space, greater administrative support, and cooperative learning experiences.

...Like non-profit organizations throughout the country, the Community School struggles with limited resources to continue to deliver a high quality of service to our constituents. ... As local, state, and federal funds continue to decline and an increasing demand on private foundations for their support make those funds more competitive, organizations like the Community School are relying more on the generosity and caring of individuals. The Board has stepped up its fundraising efforts to minimize the effects of this deficit and welcomes your much needed support.

That said, 1997 has been a busy year with many challenges and many rewards. The residential program graduated ten students and Passages graduated two student/parents. These twelve talented, young graduates are why the Community School and all associated with it support and believe in a second chance.

How The Residential Program Works:

Our residential school is for 16- to 20-year-old high school dropouts. Eight students live at the School for six months during which time they must hold jobs in the community, pay room and board, and attend classes six evenings a week.

Established in August of 1973, the School is state-approved and designed to teach students not only academic skills but skills that will help them take care of themselves in a practical sense. Most importantly, students relearn ways of relating to adults and to each other that enhance both community life and individual potential. Those who complete the program successfully earn a high school diploma.

After a two-week trial period students are assigned a staff member called their "one-to-one." Students meet with their one-to-ones weekly to discuss personal and practical issues. This experience often forms a close and enduring connection between student and staff member.

Students work a minimum of 28 hours and pay $60 for room and board weekly. Although their jobs may be physically hard and low-paid, they learn the connection between earning money and the pride of supporting themselves and a job well done.

One-to-one tutoring in an informal setting often restores a positive attitude toward learning. We consider each student's academic history, learning style and interests. In addition to the mandated academic subjects, the curriculum covers many challenging areas of personal growth and learning. Students may attend classes in parenting, substance abuse prevention, conflict resolution, sexuality and self esteem, and choose electives in assertiveness, non-violence, and relapse prevention.

Cooking, cleaning, and menu-planning are required courses. Students wake up with their own alarm clocks, budget their own money, launder their own clothes, and arrange their rooms. Once a month they go camping. Trips include climbing, canoeing, hiking, ropes courses, and participating in outdoor science and geography labs.

Students participate in weekly meetings. On Thursday night, staff and students gather for check-in, updates, a short workshop on an aspect of group living, and applause for student accomplishments. Students with rule infractions attend the Consequences Meeting, where a rotating team of one student and one staff, facilitated by a former student, must reach consensus in assigning a consequence.

How Passages Works:

This program serving out-of-school 15-to-20-year-old parents is modeled on the Walkabout, a rite of passage for youths in aboriginal Australia [*introduced to CS by famed educator Arnie Langberg, ed.*].

In Australia, the outback provides a natural challenge for those making the journey to adulthood to test and practice core skills of their culture. In our culture, isolation serves as an outback for many students having little community support or education, few job skills, and limited mobility and means of communication. We join our students in their journey and help them develop skills to survive and nurture their children. We honor and build on their current skills and credit students for abilities and skills learned in other schools and agencies.

Students work at their own pace to acquire proficiency in twenty-two Core Skills and meet at least once a week with a Community School teacher.

Passages is committed to a long-term, caring relationship between the student and a teacher/counselor who serves as instructor, guide, resource provider, and ally. Most importantly, school comes to the student, along with reimbursement for child care and transportation. We tailor the scheduling and design of lessons to the life situations and needs of the student, who gradually focuses more and more on learning within the community, with periodic gatherings for group activities.

Students often learn about us from a social service agency, public school, friend, teacher, counselor or brochure. There are no

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set terms or semesters, and openings occur throughout the year when students graduate and leave the program. New students complete an initial interview covering all aspects of their life experience. We also assess their math, reading, social studies and other academic skills.

The final phase is the Passage, in which the student designs, conducts, monitors, assesses, and presents her/his own learning project, with guidance from a Community School teacher. Graduation follows the successful completion of the Passage.

REPORT FROM THE RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

by Co-Director Dora Lievow

The School has struggled with the issue of scores and testing. Despite our dislike for the often-boring multiple-choice format, it provides a rubric for assessing important critical thinking skills that we've been unable to replace. Students often have little experience separating fact from opinion, exploring inferences, eliminating wrong assumptions, or reading carefully for details and nuances. The numerical assessment provides a familiar guidepost for teacher and student.

As much as we value the experience of learning in itself, outcomes are just as important, and in such a personal environment, we've needed to maintain objective measures.

It's also a crucial accomplishment for students to succeed within the context of past failure. Without a standard testing program, we've argued, students could graduate without confidence that they could tackle S.A.T.'s, the Armed Services exams, or job screening requiring written tests.

A dilemma for staff results because acquiring test-taking skills is time-consuming, initially failure-ridden, and mind-deadening. ...Illich cautioned that schools have a tendency to be benign at their inception, neutral for a time, and in the end, negative toward their students, since institutions dedicated to serving the needs of others invariably end by serving primarily their own needs.

Is our belief in "objective measures" really serving our students? Does grading satisfy our need as teachers to corroborate our achievements or does it truly assess our students' skills? If a young person loves and writes poetry yet frequently chooses the second best answer on a poetry multiple choice test, what have we assessed when we know this? Are we de-valuing other graduation criteria (chores, camping trips) by not grading them? What are we teaching our students by our acquiesence to multiple choice tests about the multiple answers that usually are valid in response to real-life questions?

As we approach our twenty-fifth year, we need to continue to challenge ourselves and our own traditions. It's exciting to be inviting other educators to help us accomplish this and to launch our next quarter century of alternative education.

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER

by Co-Director Emanuel Pariser

Definitions:

Attention: "From the Latin adtendere meaning to stretch towards, giving heed, earnest direction of the mind, observant care, notice, the act of tending to the pleasure and comfort of others..." —Oxford English Dictionary

Attention Deficit Disorder: "Yeah, I really do have it, I crave attention, I never got enough of it in my life." —Community School Student

The Bad News:

How is it that the term attention deficit disorder has most often been applied to students like the one quoted above, and not to the people and organizations who forgot to pay attention to them? What about the policy makers and politicians whose attentions seem solely focused these days on our financial deficit? What about the social forces which have conspired to render almost a third of our population uninsured or underinsured? Has anyone labeled them and provided them with the costly but obligatory biochemical fix?

Students troop into the Community School with all sorts of labels affixed to them these days: they are depressed, they have ADD, they have a learning disability, they are teen parents, they are dropouts, and so forth. We insist on locating the problem in the individual, giving it a name, and then "treating" it—this way we can continue to blame the victims of our own attention deficit! It's a brilliant and self perpetuating scheme that keeps us looking in the wrong places for solutions instead of the many people who just need "notice." They may also need "pharmaceuticals," just like the rest of us—but they have suffered most deeply from the profound inattention they have received as human beings in a culture where people are not the bottom line.

The Good News is that there are hundreds of endeavors in this country like the Community School which are succeeding in restoring attention to their students. And there are thousands of people and agencies who have benefited and in turn support these outposts of respect and "observant care." Our experience this year is that people everywhere are looking for places where they can be treated like whole human beings—not "bricks in the wall." The School helped to organize and sustain a group of educators in the Mid-Coast area who are providing options to students in Belfast, Rockland, Union, Thomaston, Waldoboro, and Blue Hill. Maine's Substance Abuse Commission, in its Premium Bill to raise money for prevention for school-aged youngsters, specifically recognized alternative schools as a venue in which prevention work gets done.

Faculty from several alternative schools and programs visited us to consider adapting elements of our model in their situation—particularly interesting was the visit from the "Hold for Court School" which houses kids for extended periods of time and can give no educational credit for their work. ...

There is always a struggle in outfits like the Community School between attending to our mission—the growth and development of our students—and attending to ourselves. Like mechanics who do not keep their own cars fixed, teacher/counselors often put themselves last on the list of things to minister to, and our institution works hard to preserve itself—sometimes, paradoxically, at the cost of its workers. Although our work is the most wonderful work in the world, our faculty needs to be recognized, regarded, and repaid for their unstinting efforts. This translates into the development of livable salaries (average now is $9/hr), and meaningful ways to honor the attention they pay day in and day out at 79 Washington Street, and in sixteen homes throughout Knox and Waldo Counties. Attention is often the hardest to direct, when it is oneself one needs to focus on, but this is what we must do.

Wish us luck, and thank you for your "earnest direction of mind" these past 24 years.

Passages Report by Avery Larned:

There were nine of us who made masks that day: six teen mothers, one teen father, Sue Schofield, and me, the new director of Passages still in my first week on the job. The teacher asked us to think about some things that were "going on" for us right now; to remain aware of some of these things as we felt the cool plaster-soaked gauze begin to cover our faces. I thought, "How will I possibly be able to focus when I have a stranger's hands smearing Vaseline and then sculpting a plaster mold over my face—one which will harden into a permanent shell over the course of a few minutes?"

What an introduction; not only to some of the students and to this experience on my third day on the job, but, once completed, to look at our masks in a row, lit by individual candles which amplified the expressions—to move by them and sense those expressions following us like the eyes in an expressive painting. On the car ride home I was privy to the conversations as well: "That was great. I used to love making things. Now I just never get the chance with a 16-month-old." "I thought I'd feel claustrophobic. Actually, it was really relaxing." "I'm surprised at the kind of stuff I thought about while that mask was hardening on my face. I felt like I really had a space to myself just then. I never feel that way these days."

This year Passages has made a special commitment to bring its students together and thanks to the donation of a van we've been able to host fourteen such gatherings. Whether it was mask-making, glassblowing, a trip to Medomak Valley High School to request school transcripts, a trip to Augusta to sit in on the AFDC hearings, a beauty make-over with a Mary Kay consultant, a workshop in conflict resolution skills, or an alternative childcare class, the opportunities to be together (sometimes with and sometimes without their children) gave these teen parents the rare chance to talk with one another. In part, the workshops were successful because of the turn-out and the topic. They were also successful because the students spent time together comparing notes on parenting, venting their frustrations, laughing, creating and sharing stories. We have many more ideas for the year to come.

Besides the group work, our one-to-one teaching format continues to thrive. We've had two more graduations, and three are due over the next few months. We remain fully enrolled up to our limit with fifteen active students. We have more students awaiting acceptance into the program than we have teachers to work with them.

We continue to challenge ourselves as educators by updating and refining our twenty-two core skills which make up part of the Passages curriculum....

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The following article was reprinted from the newsletter of The Pathfinder Center following their *reprint of Holt Associates' periodical for homeschooling parents and children,* Growing Without Schooling, *a one-year subscription (6 issues) to which costs $25. Write or call* Growing Without Schooling, *2269 Mass Ave. Cambridge MA 02140; (617)-864-3100. We first published an earlier study conducted by Brian Ray in the Winter, 1987-88 issues of* ΣΚΟΛΕ *and reprinted in volume I of* Challenging the Giant, the Best of ΣΚΟΛΕ.

A NATIONWIDE HOMESCHOOL STUDY

by Brian Ray, President of the
National Home Education Research Institute

Recently, the National Home Education Research Institute and I were able to complete a nationwide study of homeschooling. The purpose of this study was to examine the academic achievement and social activities of home-educated students and the basic demographics of their families, to assess the relationships between student achievement and selected student and family variables, and to describe and explore certain longitudinal changes among home-educated students and their families. I'll summarize the study here; the full-length report is available as a book titled *Strengths of Their Own—Home Schoolers Across America.*

The target population was all homeschooling families in the United States. Data were collected on 1,657 families and their 5,402 children. 275 of the families had participated in my 1990 nationwide study; which only included families from the Home School Legal Defense Association's membership. In this present study, our goal was to include a more representative sample of homeschoolers across America. Many organizations and individuals cooperated with us in this effort. HSLDA largely sponsored the study.

Here is a brief look at the demographics of the families. With 3.3 children and 98% being headed by married couples, they were much larger than the 1.5% average. Ninety-five percent of family income was earned by the fathers; 34% of them were professionals and 11% were small husiness owners. Eighty-eight percent of the mothers were homemakers/home educators and only 16% of the mothers worked outside the home. A wide variety of religious affiliations was evident among the parents: Atheists, Buddhists, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, New Agers, and others participated, while about 90% identified themselves as Christians.

The parents had higher than average educational attainment; 46% of the fathers had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 42% of the mothers had the same. These families' median annual income of $43,000 was a little lower than the median for all married-couple families in the United States. The parents spent, on average, $546 per child per year for home education.

The mother did 88% of the "formal" teaching of the children while the father did 10% of the teaching. The large majority of these children were not being taught by professionally trained and government-certified teachers.

On average, the children had been taught at home for 5 years since age 5, 85% were in grades K through 8, and the vast majority of their parents planned to homeschool them through their secondary school years. Parents handpicked curriculum materials—rather than purchasing complete programs—for 71% of the students. The social activities of these children were quite varied; for example, 47% were involved in music classes, 48% were involved in group sports, and 77% participated in Sunday school.

These students scored, on the average, at high percentiles on standardized academic achievement tests over 80% in reading, language, math, listening, science, social studies, and study skills. (The national average is the 50th percentile.)

Several analyses were conducted to determine which independent variables were significantly related to academic achievement. There was no significant relationship between achievement and (a) whether the father was a certified teacher, (b) whether the mother was a certified teacher, (c) family income, (d) money spent on education, (e) legal status of the family; (f) time spent on formal instruction, (g) age formal instruction began, and (h) degree of state regulation of homeschooling.

Achievement was statistically significantly related, in some cases, to father's education level, mother's education level, gender of student, years home-educated, use of libraries, who administered th e test, and use of computers. The relationships were, however, weak and not practically significant.

This and other studies indicate that very few background variables (e.g. socio-economic status of parents, regulation by state) explain the academic achievement of the home-educated. It is possible that the home education environment ameliorates the effect of variables that are typically considered a detriment to students. A variety of students in a variety of home education settings have performed very well in terms of academic achievement. I surmise at length, in the book-length report on the study, why the home-educated are doing so well.

I recognize that there are many criteria for determining success in education (e.g. personal character traits, behavior towards others, personal beliefs, critical thinking skills, and knowledge). Further, I recognize that standardized academic achievement tests measure only one aspect of education. But regardless of one's opinion about the validity and value of these tests and their accompanying scores, they provide information about the success of groups of (and sometimes individual) students that is widely used in the educational, political, legal and media worlds.

Dr. Rav's book *Strengths of Their Own* is $19.95 + $2 shipping, and his newsletter, *The Home School Researcher*, is $25 a year (4 issues), from NHERI, PO Box 13939, Salem OR 97309; phone 503-364-1490, fax (503)-364-2827 Website: www.nheri.org e-mail: mail@nheri.org

From: GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING #117 • Jul./Aug., '97

* * * * *

The following two letters move me very deeply, not just *because the writers are happy to receive our journals but also because, like the glimpse Lisa's boys give her of their creative play activities, these two mothers give us the readers a glimpse into their mothering styles just by what they say and the way they say it!*

Dear Mary,

It's been a while since I've talked with you (and we've never met!), but I had originally called you because a teacher I know at

Prescott College in AZ had told me your journal would interest me. I'm a single mother and receiving help from my parents and the government, and I had asked if you could send me a sample copy of either of the journals even though I couldn't pay full price. I remember it was so nice to talk with you, and you've been so thoughtful and generous in remembering me. I was surprised and grateful to receive a copy of *Challenging the Giant*, vol. 3, in the mail and the correction page! I hope I wrote to thank you, beca use I know I intended to!

Last year my mother bought me a subscription to the journals as a Christmas present and this year I'd like to renew, because I enjoy the journals and as a "thanks" for all that you've done for me! (Actually, upon contemplation, I'm not sure if my mother ordered both journals for me or just JFL) but I do have here Spring, 1997, Summer, 1997 and Winter 1997 of SKOLE, so if that was your gift, then thank you!

What is the Berskhire Live-out that you mentioned in the Winter 1997 issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, and is it something that goes on every year? The name sounded interesting [*See ad, ed.*} My boys are 3 1/2 and 5 1/2 now and are wonderful! Today my 3 1/2 saw the UPS truck pull up. He got all excited and said, "The ABC man is here!" Sometimes I overhear my 5 1/2 year old quietly and so patiently explaining something he has learned (like counting, for example) to his little brother. Sometimes the two of them take a music stand, my flute and the cleaning rod for the flute into the living room at my parents' house and conduct and play in a "concert"! It's something none of us have even been invited to see and hear, but if we're lucky we can catch glimpses under the guise of just passing through the hallway.

Thanks for all you do.
Peace, Lisa Armstrong

This one is from Martha Goff Stoner, whose piece on movement in the classroom appeared in the winter issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ:

Dear Mary,

Thank you so much for publishing my essay in the *Journal of Alternative Education*. I am still reading the issue, so I haven't read everything yet, but I especially am grateful for your reprint of Elizabeth Byrne Ferm's *Freedom in Education*. After I've had time to think a bit, I may send you a response to that piece.

I regret that either I didn't send you a description of myself or somehow it was lost in what I imagine to be your many papers [groan!! ed.], because the info you gave about me at the beginning of my article is not quite right. I am a former college teacher. I now homeschool my two sons. Manchester is a small farming community, population about 2500, so we cannot boast a college quite yet.

I am dreaming of starting a farm school here, but it is at the buried seed stage right now, so I cannot predict the future. At any rate, thanks for publishing my essay, and I hope you will have room to correct the contributor's info in the next issue, because I don't want anyone to think I am posturing—heaven forbid!

Yours and blessings,
Martha

This letter was sent on by a friend who is deeply involved with educational oppression of non-white and working class high school-age kids in the inner city, who had received from someone else via e-mail:

Dear Family and Friends,

This week I learned something but am not sure what it was. I sometimes find that I can sort experiences out by writing about them. It seemed that it might be suitable to share the experience with you in the interest of nurturing our relationship, because this week is rather typical of what is currently going on in my life at one level.

I was substitute for a high school biology teacher on Tuesday. His instructions were to show a video which I had seen in previous classes and for students to individually fill in answers on a question worksheet as they watched. I gave some preliminary remarks to the first class with the intent of heightening their anticipation and preparing them to recognize the answers as they were given.

Out of 23 in the class, 7 soon had their heads down on the desk, 7 were not paying attention and had to be quieted several times, while the remaining 9 watched with interest and were filling in the questions. The sound was not good—partly because of where the TV was placed. For the second class I moved it to the other side of the room where the sound would reflect off the cabinets and bounce into the classroom. But it also seemed important to plead with the next class to be quiet so that all could hear. I hoped for a better showing.

My pleas were not only ignored but could hardly be heard by the unruly group that came in. I was at the point of calling for official assistance (we have 8 full time hall monitors in our high school who can remove disruptive students from class). At this point one of the girls startled me with this observation: You are trying to control us but you have been overruled.

I got the students' attention by raising my voice and repeated what the girl had divulged and told them that I was aware of its truth—the students are in control, I recognize and support that, the class would be what the students wanted it to be. I then began to tell them about the question sheet-- but they did not want to hear about that and said: Just show the video.

So I did. Almost all of the class watched it, no one had their head down! But only two students answered the questions. My third class was a disaster. The students were to take a pre-test in preparation for a big test on Thursday. The students were unruly, it was difficult to take the roll (as a substitute I don't know one student from another) there actually were troublemakers in the room who did not belong there and I finally had to call FA's for assistance. They had to return twice more and bring in the Assistant Principal. Half the class was eventually taken out. Even then a few of the remaining students were argumentative and resistant to working altho most of the rest did their work, some grudgingly.

As the period drew to a close, I chatted with one of the students about the difficulty of concentrating on assignments or learning in such a class. She responded: The trouble is that you are trying to change us. The bell rang and as the students left one boy who had been trying to do the assignment gave me his pre-test. I told him that he should keep it as a study guide and tried to explain that he apparently had not heard me say that this was a pre-test and should be used as a study guide during the next two days. He was highly offended to think that he had done some work which was not to be turned in. He said: That's not fair.

Quandary: Part of me agrees with students that they are in control. That is a lesson the citizens of all countries need to understand. The world has suffered too often from misguided—or worse—people in positions of power. The Hitlers, Stalins, Pol Pots and many lesser demigods have wreaked havoc at the expense of ordinary citizens over and over again. And the citizens have not known how to resist. But should urban youth be allowed to disrupt classrooms? What sort of classroom do urban youth today desire? It bothers me to see some wanting to study under impossible conditions, bombarded with distractions. Yet, the majority apparently have a different agenda.

The disparity between a society which utilizes FA's to enforce control and an urban youth culture which resists is unhealthy. Somehow the two need to be brought together. This is no mere teenage rebellion. It is a power struggle with much deeper roots and consequences. What did my experiences last Tuesday have to tell me about this situation?

The following talk first appeared in Jerry Mintz's AERO #23 (mentioned above). We reprint it even though we personally have misgivings about the nationwide spread of Charter Schools, leaving out as it seems to so many of our most vulnerable families in some parts of the country.

FROM A TALK IN SUPPORT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN MAINE

by Emanuel Pariser, Co-Director, Community School

Member, Committee on Dropout, Truant, and Alternative Education; Chair, Maine Substance Abuse Services Commission; Steering Committee, Maine Alternative Education Association

The Community School is sponsoring a day-long workshop on Tuesday, May 5th, in Augusta, on Charter Schools—how to start one, what good charter school legislation looks like, etc. presented by Joe Nathan. Joe is a national expert and leader in this area. He works out of the Hubert Humphrey Institute for Policy Studies in Minnesota, and has been one of the prime movers behind the Charter Schools Movement. We hope it will be in Jewett Hall again, 8-2:30. For more information on this contact me at emanuel@cschool.acadia.net.

Last year we sponsored Arnold Langberg to talk about the Walkabout model of education. I invite any of you who are interested to come. Here are the elements which Joe Nathan suggests are critical to creating effective legislation for a strong and effective charter-school bill:

Essential Elements of Effective Charter-School Legislation:

1. The school is public. It is non-sectarian. It may not charge tuition. It may not have admissions tests of any kind. It must follow health and safety regulations.

2. The state authorizes more than one organization to start and operate a public school in the community. The local board is eligible to be a sponsor (and to convert some or all of its existing schools to charter status, if a majority of teachers in the school vote to do this). But the sponsor of a charter school may also be a college or university, state board of education, state chartering agency or other nonprofit, nonsectarian group.

3. Accountability is based on a performance contract. The authorizing agency and educators who work in the school agree on student outcomes to be achieved. The continued existence of the school depends on whether these outcomes are achieved.

4. There is an up-front waiver from rules about curriculum, management, and teaching. States may specify student outcomes. But determining how the school operates should be up to the people who establish and operate it. The charter school concept trades bureaucracy for accountability, regulation for results.

5. The charter school is a school of choice. It is actively chosen by faculty, students and families. No one is assigned there.

6. The school becomes a discrete entity: The law may let the founders choose any organization available under general state law or may specify an organization, such as nonprofit. As a legal entity, the school will have its board. There is real site-management. Teachers, if employees, have full rights to organize and bargain collectively. However, their bargaining unit is separate from any district bargaining unit.

7. The full per-pupil allocation moves with the student. This amount should be roughly the average state allocation per pupil, or the average in the district from which the student comes. If the state provides extra funds for students from low-income families or with disabilities, these funds also should follow the students.

8. Participating teachers should be protected and given new opportunities. Teachers may take a leave from public school sys-

tems, and while on leave will retain their seniority. They may continue to participate in the local or state retirement programs. New teachers may join state retirement programs. They may choose to be employees, or to organize a professional group under which they collectively own and operate the school.

A Few Facts on Charter Schools in the United States:

This list was developed by Minnesota State Senator Ember Reichgott Junge, Ted Kolderie, and Joe Nathan. For further information, contact the Center for School Change, Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, 301 19th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55455, (612) 626-1834. For more information, see *Charter Schools*, by Joe Nathan, published by Jossey Bass (800) 956-7739.

1. Since 1991 29 states have adopted some kind of charter school.

2. About 780 charters have been created:
    a. 1992 - 1 school,
    b. 1993 - 35 schools,
    c. 1994 - 59 schools,
    d. 1995 - 71 schools,
    e. 1996 - 480 schools,
    f. 1997 - 780 schools.

3. 300 new charters are scheduled to open as of fall, 1997. A 1995 study by the Education Commission of the States found that in the six states with the "strongest" laws, there were 226 charters. In the six states with the weakest laws, there were 16 charter schools.

The central differences between "strong" and weak laws are that:
    a. strong laws permit local school boards AND some other public organization(s), such as state boards of education, public universities, city governments, etc., to sponsor and authorize charter public schools,
    b. strong laws permit creation of schools which receive money directly from the state,
    c. strong laws permit conversion of existing public schools, as well as creation of new ones,
    d. strong laws permit charter schools to create their own working conditions, rather than be forced to ask a local school-board or union for waivers,
    e. strong laws permit unlimitedor large numbers of charter schools.

4. Charters have been renewed in California, Colorado, and Minnesota, based on improved achievement.

5. Six charters have been closed because of financial mismanagement or lack of progress in student achievement.

6. A variety of positive "ripple effects" have been noted, especially in states which permit local and statewide sponsorship of charters. These ripple effects are helping improve the existing public education system.

...do not support vouchers.

8. Several studies found that students attending charter schools in many states tend to be more racially diverse, low income, and likely to speak a language other than English in their home than other public-school students in the state.

9. In states which permit only school boards to sponsor schools, both fewer and a much narrower range of schools is developing. Local boards appear to be most willing to sponsor schools for students with whom they have been unsuccessful.

10. In mid-October1997, President Clinton recommended that every US public school be either a charter school, or have charter-like responsibilities to improve, achieve, or be closed.

One of the biggest questions raised by opponents to charter legislation is that local school districts will lose money as it follows students to the charter school. Several points are important to remember here. In the case of students who have dropped out, are habitually truant, have transferred to private schools, or started homeschooling, the district has already lost the state allocation. Finding a way for them to return deprives no particular district of money. Money raised both locally and statewide for education is designated for educating students, not for any one particular system to do so. As another form of public school, charter schools are an appropriate venue for investing tax dollars. What school districts can do in response to these competitive pressures is become innovative themselves, as has happened in Boston and in Colorado, where the number of public alternatives has increased dramatically in response to charter legislation!

I have been working with teenagers who didn't fit the conventional system all my life. I have seen firsthand the suffering and self-loathing they experience when they fail to succeed. From my work with substance abuse prevention, with other alternative educators, and with guidance counselors and superintendents across the state, I know that my students and their families are not the only ones who have suffered this fate.

Through my work at the Community School I have also seen how a school that fits these students' needs can create a renaissance in their sense of self, make them feel that a future is possible and worthwhile, put them back into the drivers' seat of their lives. Simply put, students and families need more learning options. They need to find a niche where they fit and are valued for their capabilities. A system of charter schools will help to create some of these niches, both through the charters themselves, and through the innovation in the conventional system which they will stimulate. Competition in this framework, on a level playing field, between conventional schools and charters can only be helpful to families and students.

ADVERTISEMENT:

"FREE" SCHOOL TO OPEN IN WESTERN CONNECTICUT

Plans are brewing for the possible September 1999 opening of a Sudbury-model school in the Housatonic Valley region. Laura Webber, a middle school English/History teacher and a program facilitator for the Interlocken Center for Experiential Learning in Hillsboro, NH, is heading the development campaign. Laura comments, "I've become convinced that democratic free schooling is the healthiest model for education."

The proposed Housatonic Valley Community School will model itself on SudburyValley and other schools such as Summerhill in England and the Free School in Albany, NY. Students aged 11 to 18 will pursue their own interests in an "uncurricularized" environment which supports students' goals.

Laura hopes to form a Founder's Group of volunteers and parents to help guide the school through its first years of development. Contact Unschooler Luz Shosie at (203) 458-7402 or Laura at (203) 794-9065.

The story of one school with the courage to put students' welfare *first*

Making It Up as We Go Along

The Story of the Albany Free School

Chris Mercogliano

Foreword by

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Making It Up as We Go Along
The Story of the Albany Free School
Chris Mercogliano
Foreword by Joseph Chilton Pearce

Making It Up as We Go Along is the story of the Albany Free School, a school based on real freedom, real community, real democratic principles, and real affection between teachers and students. Thanks to this ongoing experiment in education, one of the longest running of its kind in America, Chris Mercogliano has come to understand how children learn and above all, how important autonomy and authenticity are to the learning process.

There is no preset methodology because Mercogliano and his students make it up as they go along. What the author does do is render into words some of the possibilities that abound when teachers and students learn together in an atmosphere of freedom, personal responsibility, and mutual respect. He proves that teachers can help all students pursue their genius and their dreams through the union of self-direction, excitement, joy, and emotional honesty.

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RID-A-HIM

(a first installment from a forthcoming book)

by Chris Mercogliano

Long-term subscribers to ΣΚΟΛΕ *had the privilege of previewing most of Chris Mercogliano's first book,* Making It Up As We Go Along: the History of Albany's Free School *(Paperback, Heinemann, to be published in May, 1998)—seriatim, as it appeared. Here is a first installment on his new one—tentatively titled* Rid-A-Him*—which promises to be a blockbuster, as you will see when you read on. I am tempted to give you the first four chapters in this issue, feeling the urgency of the problem about which Chris writes so eloquently—but am restraining my impulse, and limiting the amount to a more manageable size per issue! The next two chapters will appear in the summer issue.*

INTRODUCTION

WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH
—a slogan from George Orwell's 1984

Somewhere on earth a government-backed drug experiment of massive proportions is underway. Millions of subjects are daily administered a powerful pharmacological cocktail which deadens their spirits, straitjackets their minds and alters the biochemistry of their bodies. The purpose: to render them more manageable under certain controlled conditions. In most cases, the experiment is not voluntary, and the greater population is largely unaware of its existence.

The short-term side-effects of the drugs are well-known because the experiment is now in its third decade. Headaches, loss of appetite, irritability, depression and sleeplessness are not uncommon. Long-term side-effects are as yet unknown. Their determination awaits follow-up studies of the first generation of subjects as they continue through post-experiment life.

The behavior of the subjects is assessed by specially trained professional monitors who spend approximately thirty hours per week with them in specially designed isolation environments. Each subject's performance is entered into his permanent record which will determine future hiring potential. Non-compliance is punishable by law.

Subjects are led to believe that participation in the experiment is essential to their well-being. They are told that the drugs, even though they cause varying degrees of mental and physical discomfort, are good for them—that they cannot function normally without them. The drugs are issued by government-licensed private medical practitioners who claim that they are a triumph of modern medicine over ignorance because they will instantly improve cognitive functioning, enabling the subjects to perform the same repetitive tasks at the same rate as the non-medicated control group. The experiment has no projected date of termination.

* * * *

You might already be wondering where in the world this Orwellian-sounding human medical experiment is taking place. Perhaps in one of the rapidly-developing countries where democratic safeguards are not yet in place?

Guess again.

If you suspect that it's happening right here in the United States of America, the land of the free and home of the brave, then you are absolutely right.

But what is the setting? Is the experiment being conducted inside our burgeoning prison system, a search for a more cost-effective means of controlling an increasingly angry and fractious inmate population? Within training institutions for developmentally challenged adults, a new method for facilitating their mastery of real world tasks? Or in asylums for the criminally insane, as a way to suppress violent impulses?

The answer is: none of the above. This late-twentieth-century pharmaceutical attempt to manage behavior on a mass scale is occurring in our nation's schools—public and private, elementary and secondary.

And who are the subjects? Our children.

* * * *

The British writers George Orwell and Aldous Huxley were modern-day prophets of a sort. As with so many prophets, like Isaiah and Ezekiel and others of the Old Testament, they didn't write literally. Rather they employed allegory and metaphor to alert people to the shadowy ramifications of the social patterns of their day. In *1984,* Orwell's dark tale about the basic ingredients of totalitarianism, he creates the post-apocalypse state, Oceania, where Big Brother and his thought police practice mind control over an entire population with frightening precision.

Meanwhile, in the *Brave New World* of Aldous Huxley, a contemporary of Orwell's, the citizens are directed to take a powerful mood enhancing drug called Soma in order to insure that they will never be inclined to rebel against the crushing uniformity of their everyday existence. Soma makes the people "happy" and eliminates the need for thought police since here one no longer questions anything.

Orwell and Huxley were alarmed by the totalitarian turn they saw eastern Europe take before and after World War II. Their grim predictions became a weird sort of talisman for questioning members of my post-war baby-boom generation, and as the momentous calendar year 1984 came and went, we pondered to what extent our world resembled their negative utopian fantasies.

It will be my intention in this book to argue—with every ounce of Orwell and Huxley's passion—that by electing to rely on potent mood- and mind-altering chemicals to subdue and regulate its non-conforming children, our society has taken a giant step down the road toward their dire vision of modern humanity. Here we must not forget that our "scientific" system of education in this country is based directly on methodology developed in late-nineteenth century Prussia, itself a precursor to Nazi Germany.

* * * *

At last count, over two million American schoolchildren are being "medicated" with drugs such as the stimulant commonly known as Ritalin, and/or antidepressants bearing names like Prozac. Lately the anti-hypertensive, Clonidine, has been added to the mix "to produce round-the-clock effects." And the number of children is increasing every day. Most begin taking the drugs at the age of six or seven. Some are eventually able to wean themselves off of them, while others face a potentially life-long dependency.

The treatment process does not start with these children complaining to their parents or teachers that they feel unwell, as they so often do at the onset of common illnesses which are relieved by antibiotics or decongestants. No, this process, for which there is no historical precedent—hence my use of the term "experiment"—begins with the complaints of parents and teachers: The children, their own or their professional charges, are too noisy, too active, too pushy, too willful, too impulsive, too impatient, too emotional, or too aggressive. They won't listen, won't obey, won't sit still, won't pay attention, won't follow instructions, won't cooperate or won't share. Or they appear unable to learn certain cognitive skills at societally mandated age-levels. Or many or all of the above.

Parents carry the complaints to medical professionals who either accept the parents' description of the "symptoms" willy-nilly or order the children to undergo various types of tests that measure only a very narrow range of intelligence and ability. Though the scenario varies widely from child to child, in an overwhelming majority of cases the conclusion is the same: the *child* has a problem, a serious—albeit highly amorphous—"disorder" of some kind. The problem is then assigned a sober, medical-sounding name, with Attention Deficit Disorder, or ADD, currently being the most fashionable. If the child is a highly energetic type, then an "H" is added for "Hyperactivity."

It is not my intention here to point fingers at parents and teachers who have felt it necessary to resort to chemical means of behavioral management. All parents and almost all teachers whom I know only want what is best for their offspring or their students. Many are ambivalent towards the very idea of drugging them, but end up deciding there is no other way to get them to adhere to the routines and limits of home and classroom, turning to Ritalin, et al—for the answer represents an act of frustration or desperation akin to spanking and other forms of physical discipline.

Furthermore, many of the children who will be the focus of this discussion *do* have problems, sometimes emotional, sometimes behavioral, sometimes cognitive—which are sometimes quite serious. They are indeed crying out for help—for *attention*, as it were—in a multitude of ways.

My purpose in these pages will be to describe an approach to working with the kinds of kids who would otherwise be controlled by medication in conventional school environments that eliminates the need for any drugs whatsoever. It is not a new approach, but one which has been tested by time in the little school where I have taught for over twenty-five years known simply as the Free School.

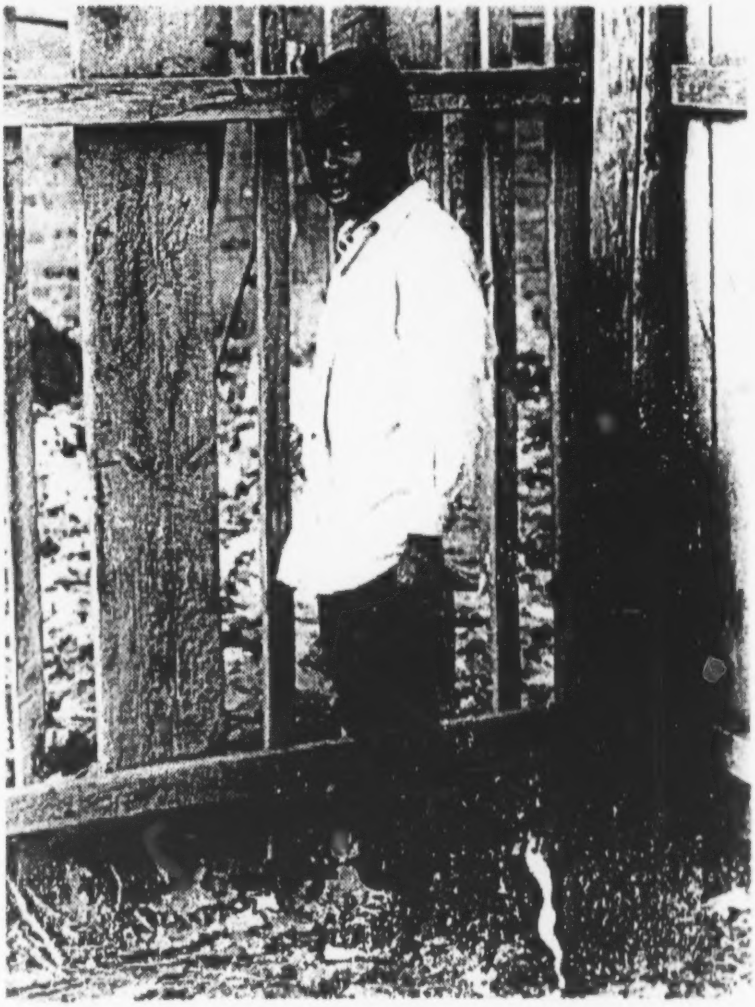
It is not, however, a method, some prepackaged plan with a progression of delineated steps like the well-known Montessori method. I repeat, it is an *approach,* an overview, a way of understanding children where each child is recognized as a unique individual—one developmentally distinct from another—and not as a statistical entry in a school superintendent's quarterly evaluation. Such an approach rests upon a foundation of faith in every child's inborn desire to develop to their fullest. It is Rogerian; which is to say, it is inspired, in part, by Carl Rogers' Person-centered psychology—and by the Human Potential Movement of the 1960s and 70s, which held that it is the mark of a good society to enable all of its citizen to reach their highest human potential. It is anything but Calvinistic and does not see children as a pool of defective, lazy sinners from which only a select and predetermined few are chosen for advancement.

The unabashedly optimistic approach to guiding children's development which I am about to present equates the bell curve with a trick curve, one which should be removed from the classroom and put where it rightfully belongs—in a baseball booth on a carnival midway. And above all, it views it as the responsibility of all who are in positions of authority in settings where children grow and unfold, be they parents, teachers, school administrators, psychologists, coaches or camp counselors, to alter and adapt those settings to meet the children's needs and not the other way around.

* * * *

I harbor no agenda to blame anyone here. For to blame is to polarize, and to polarize is to cause others to become defensive and resistant to change. At the same time I am deeply disturbed—sometimes enraged—by the growing reliance on drugs to control children, and I intend my analysis of the issue to be a radical one. I say "radical" because it derives from the Latin *radix,* meaning root, and my goal is to attempt to dig all the way down to the roots of the matter at hand.

To the extent I am successful, I will demonstrate that the problem is no one person's, or institution's, fault. For I sincerely believe that if anyone is to blame, then we are all to blame; if anyone is a victim, then we are all victims. The current acceptability of Ritalin and all of its pharmacological cousins is the logical, horrifying end-result of an entire set of perspectives on education, child development and medical care that we have arrived at together as a people. To the extent that I fall short of my goal, I knowingly run the risk of offending some to whom I would hope to reach out with an alternative vision of teaching and rearing children. To you I offer my apologies now.



Picture taken at the Free School by Orin Domenico

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This book stands in protest not only against the wholesale drugging of children in order to obtain certain educational or behavioral results, but also against the assigning of pathological labels to those who don't fit in, don't measure up, or don't "go with the flow." In my mind, the drugs and the labels are but a symptom of a deeper disorder within a culture that is becoming increasingly schizophrenic, one that is more and more controlled and mechanistic on one hand, and more and more ungoverned and hyperstimulated on the other. This book will suggest that America's labeled children are our canaries in the coal mine.

The danger of establishing a labeling nomenclature for children, as we have already so thoroughly done, is that it quickly becomes a convenient catch-all, a palatable, standardized explanation that results in all of the kids in this or that category getting the same standard "treatment." These children cease to be seen as individuals, each with their own quirks and idiosyncrasies, their own developmental trajectories—and whether it is intended or not, they inevitably become stigmatized in their own and society's eyes.

Much has been reported lately about the so-called "syndrome" Attention Deficit Disorder, and like Dr. Thomas Armstrong, who has written widely on the subject [*See review of his book starting on p. 23*], I, too, believe that ADD—along with all of its current partners and historical antecedents (Dyslexia, Hyperactivity, Minimal Brain Damage, Learning Disability)—is a myth. And it is built atop a pyramid of other modern-day myths: that learning is strictly a sedentary, mental activity occurring logically and in straight lines; that all children are supposed to become adept at various cognitive functions such as the "three 'R's" at the same rate and the same time; that schools are meant only to be places of instruction; that the role of teachers and parents is to control and manage children's inclinations; and bleeding over into the realm of medicine, that pills cure disease states.

But if certain children today are to be viewed as suffering from a "disease" called ADD—and without a doubt many of the children in question *are* suffering from varying degrees of *dis-ease*—then I will argue strenuously in the following pages that this disease is one which would be deemed "iatrogenic" in medical parlance. Iatrogenic means simply, "doctor-caused," and it denotes situations where a doctor's treatment strategy results in new and unintended symptoms. The causes of the "symptoms" of

ADD—distractibility, excessive energy levels, oversensitivity, selfishness, impulsivity and aggressiveness, reluctance and in some cases inability to learn to read, write and figure at an early age—are much more likely to be found in the environment than in the children themselves. To see it otherwise is, quite frankly, to blame the victim. So our society is saying, "Oh, it doesn't matter what the causes of the problem are; let's just 'fix' it right here and now with these harmless little tablets."—the mantra of the multi-billion dollar "special education" industry. To avoid the prickly issue of causation, as so many today would have us do, is to take the easy way out and only serves to reinforce the status quo.

Actually, it is my belief that the aforementioned "symptoms" are a kind of instinctive survival response on the part of modern children to the conditions of their lives. Or put another way, it is how certain children's behavior is interpreted and responded to, either at school or at home, that brings on the "crisis" which is then believed to require biochemical intervention in the form of Ritalin and other drugs. Here, it seems to me, is where we have taken that wrong turn into Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone*. What if we stopped judging the youthful behavior which we suddenly find so pathological as a problem to be eliminated by any means available, but rather as a signal, a vital message from the next generation?

Perhaps the most anomalous statistical aspect of ADD is this: although official estimates of the boy/girl ratio of the young people who supposedly "have" it vary widely, there is general agreement that a large majority are boys. This fact ought to arouse the curiosity of even the most nearsighted observer. Why boys? Once again there is no historical precedent for such a gender-based incidence of a particular psycho/medical condition.

Perhaps there is a clue to be found in an article entitled "A Strange Malady Called Boyhood," (reprinted in the Winter, 1996 issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, pp. 51-56) in which *New York Times* writer Natalie Tangier points out how the Tom Sawyer/Huck Finn model of boyhood, where boys are brash, willful, naughty, rambunctious, aggressive, flighty and dirty, has fast become an anachronism in late-twentieth-century American society. Parents and teachers increasingly perceive boys exhibiting such behavior as bad or unmanageable.

The situation is particularly acute in the public school system where a great many teachers, who are under increasing pressure to produce positive educational results against increasing odds, would prefer not to have to deal with these throwbacks to nineteenth-century frontier culture. Yet they have no choice because the law says that all children under the age of sixteen must attend school somewhere, and for the majority in America the only affordable option is the public schools. These end-of-the-line teachers, themselves captives in their crowded classrooms, then cope with their fate by giving their problem boys one or more powerful, mood-altering substances that temporarily eliminate the unacceptable behaviors—a symbolic getting "rid-a-him," if you will. As for the girls who have been similarly labeled, it is my belief that if you look beneath all the psychological jargon, what they are primarily guilty of is appearing and acting too boyish. Or as we used to say in the vernacular, they are *Tom*boys.

Unfortunately, an increasing number of parents, particularly mothers who are left to do most of the actual parenting, are resorting to the same strategy at home to bring difficult offspring under some semblance of control. My focus here, however, will remain more on schools and schoolchildren since this is the area where I have acquired a measure of wisdom and perspective worth sharing. The father of two spirited and strong-willed (but hardly tomboyish) daughters of my own, I feel far less confident making pronouncements and giving advice in this domain.

Now for the most strident and provocative version of my thesis—if I'm going to lose you, this will probably be the place: Viewed from a certain angle, I believe there exists a virtual conspiracy—for the most part an unconscious one—between schools, parents and the medical profession to cut our "wild colts" from the herd. Here I am borrowing, with permission and support, from John Breeding's *The Wildest Colts Make the Best Horses,* a book which has nothing to do with our four-legged equine friends. Breeding is a therapist in Austin, Texas, who daily rescues children and families from the clutches of what he calls "biopsychiatry." And while I rarely go in for conspiracy theories, I can't help but hear echoes of Huxley's and Orwell's warnings virtually everywhere I turn these days.

* * * *

Orwell and Huxley conjured up chilling worst-case scenarios to try to shock their readers to attention. And they weren't only writing about Stalinist Russia and the emerging Eastern Bloc of puppet nations, which thankfully today are in a state of hopeful transformation; they were also shining a spotlight on the seeds of totalitarianism they detected within their own society. Likewise it is my wish that my strong words will in some small way contribute to the growing literature aimed at halting the evolution of a brave new world where children are programmed to become mindless cogs in a global economic machine, and where the ones deemed useless are neutralized by "treatment strategies" and then carelessly tossed onto some societal trash heap.

Yes, this book will at times be extreme and angry, but never without hope, because my own experience as a teacher has shown me another way. Among the hundreds of children who have passed through the Free School's doors over the past thirty years, kids of every size, shape, color and class, a fair number either were or would have been considered ADD-types. We have never permitted a single one of them to take Ritalin or any other such biopsychiatric drugs (we even frown on the use of asthma medications except in the most severe cases), and yet, in all but a few instances where the families were extremely dysfunctional and appeared to lack the will or the wherewithal to change, we have been able to help those kids settle down and blossom into their full selves.

One by one I have watched these children learn a great many things without chemical crutches: how to relax, to focus, to modulate their emotional expression, to wait their turn, to make responsible choices, to appreciate themselves and others, to make friends—and perhaps above all, *how to learn*. It is this fundamental skill that carries them on to future success in the conventional schools, and then life situations, in which most of them find themselves after they leave our unusual learning laboratory in inner-city Albany, New York.

Thus, it is the kids, whose stories I will tell in the following pages, who have taught me with a conviction I will hardly keep under wraps, that it is neither necessary to classify children nor to drug them in order to help them grow into authentic, competent, well-adjusted adults eager to make the most of their lives and also to make a positive contribution to the world around them. In so doing, hopefully I will convince some of you, too.

CHAPTER ONE

John is just turned six. His parents were referred to us by their community-based health clinic where they brought him to be examined after he fitfully completed kindergarten in his neighborhood parochial school. A handsome boy, quite tall for his age, John had been displaying all of the classic signs of so-called "ADD." In school he had been restless, disruptive, at times combative. He frequently refused to do as he was told, and as a result, his parents were called in for numerous conferences with the teacher. The situation only continued to deteriorate, and at the end of the school year they were asked by the principal please not to bring John back for the first grade.

Luckily for John, the health care worker who made the referral had heard of our reputation for success with what I shall hereafter refer to—with tongue in cheek—as "Ritalin kids." She suggested to John's parents that they give the Free School a try as an alternative to putting him on medication and enrolling him in another conventional school setting.

John's nine-year-old brother, meanwhile, has been on Ritalin since he was five, and the parents, an intact, articulate, African-American couple in their mid-thirties, are not at all happy with its effect on him. So they have decided to try a different approach with John.

I had spoken at length with John's mother during the summer, which gave me the opportunity to clarify with her how we would—and would *not*—be dealing with her son. Foremost, I explained, aside from having to adhere to a few non-negotiable rules with regard to safety and respect, John would be free to set his own agenda in school. To the extent he was trustworthy he would have the run of the building. Also, there would be no compulsory classes or lessons. I tried to reassure her by guaranteeing that we would set appropriate limits on his behavior as each situation called for them, and that John was probably one of those highly intelligent kids who would do his learning on the run for a while, kind of like the stereotypical businessman rushing off to work still tying his necktie, with a half-read newspaper under his arm and a piece of hastily buttered toast clenched between his teeth.

Finally, I asked her not to expect miracles overnight. Although (thankfully) John had only spent a single year in a school setting where he was viewed as a problem and a failure, likely as not he had already learned an array of negative behavioral strategies that would take him time to unlearn.

I could tell John's mom wasn't entirely convinced, but it seemed to me we had established a solid rapport upon which we could build as the year progressed.

* * * *

Watching John enter with his mother on the first day of school, I am treated to a "fly-on-the-wall" view of one of the primary patterns I see underlying the formation of the so-called "ADD child." With John firmly by the arm, his mother gently but insistently pulls him over to the table where breakfast is being served and where Nancy, who co-directs the school with me, and I are talking over morning coffee. Mother and son are so engrossed in their private dance that they appear not to notice I am watching.

I greet them both and ask if they'd like some breakfast. John's mother looks down at John, who is leaning against her for security, and repeats my question several times before he finally mumbles softly that he isn't hungry.

Irene is an attractive woman. Her face is broad and open, always with a faint trace of a smile. She is clearly pregnant. It is difficult to engage her in conversation because her attention remains on the anxious boy still clinging sheepishly to her coat. When she tries to get him to part with his jacket, she meets with no more success than she had in getting him to eat. I notice John gradually becoming aware of the kids playing on the large wooden jungle gym at the opposite end of the "big room," as we call the high-ceilinged forty-foot-square space in the upstairs of our building where the preschool is housed and where we all—fifty students ages three through fourteen and ten teachers, interns and volunteers—eat breakfast and lunch together, family-style. Just as I had been hoping, the moment soon arrives when he releases his grip on his mother and zooms over to jump and climb with the others. Now we can talk.

As we watch John scale the jungle gym with the agility of a young cougar, I explain to Irene that kids like John with large amounts of physical energy and acumen simply need ample opportunity to be physical. That's why we have an indoor climbing structure with a double set of king-size mattresses underneath the horizontal ladder section. We also have an even larger climbing structure in the backyard and a big tumbling and wrestling mat that is used virtually every day. I assure her that most of John's so-called "hyperactivity" will disappear almost immediately because here he will have the freedom of movement and expression that was missing from his kindergarten experience.

Irene nods with a certain understanding, but then, after a thoughtful pause, she gives voice to the concern that belongs to almost all of our new parents: how will he ever learn anything if he is free to play whenever he wants to?

I respond with a reprise of my reassurances from our summer conversation, this time adding that one of society's most closely guarded secrets is how much children learn while they are playing. Not just physical and social skills, but core-level cognitive ones as well. She nods again and we talk for another five or ten minutes until she announces she needs to be going. John is so engrossed in his climbing and jumping that he scarcely acknowledges his mother's good-bye as she walks out the door. I look forward to meeting John's dad to see if we are on the same page as well.

* * * *

John spends his first day like a kitten in an unfamiliar place. Almost constantly in motion, he explores the nooks and crannies of every room in the school, stopping briefly to eat a sizeable meal at lunchtime. Amidst his travels he begins to establish his personal curriculum. For instance, he infuriates just about every kid, young and old, with whom he comes into contact, thanks to his pushy, entitled way of relating to others. His sense of boundaries is still quite infantile; just like most toddlers, he thinks that every interesting object within reach is fair game for him to grab and investigate. John's location in the building can easily be tracked today by cries of "Hey, that's mine; GIVE IT TO ME!" or "Put that microscope back on the shelf—you didn't ask to use it," or "Be quiet; we're trying to read a story in here!"

John makes no bones about his distaste for limits. But as is usually the case with newcomers, the entire school community tries to make allowances for his naiveté, and with a certain stretched tolerance, everyone lets him down easy with first and second warnings. Thus, John's maiden voyage on the good ship

Free School ends without serious incident. At three o'clock, Nancy gives Irene an honest report, telling her that the honeymoon is likely to end sooner rather than later due to John's proclivity for running afoul of the other kids, particularly those younger and smaller than himself.

The next morning my wife suggests I bring my eldest daughter's dog to school with me. Part whippet and part boxer, Lakota is a gentle, high-strung, eternal puppy, a perfect match for kids like John. He is immediately attracted to her and the two of them spend the first hour roaming the building and backyard playground together. Lakota is infinitely more tolerant of John's rough edges and this gives him a little breathing room as he begins to try to find his place in an environment which is so full of energy that a great many first-time observers perceive it as nothing short of chaotic.

Although John is technically in Nancy's first grade class, I suspect he will choose to spend a lot of time with me and my group of second and third graders, most of whom this year happen to be boys. It is already obvious that he is much more drawn to me simply because I am a man. Also, his athleticism is likely to match him up with my boys, to whom he is already equal both in size and spirit. We structure class groupings loosely for just this reason, so that we can meet children's needs as they present themselves, and avoid unnecessary conflict and frustration. Nancy, even with all of her acquired savvy in handling rambunctious, willful boys (she has also been at the school for over twenty years), would expect to have no more luck than John's teacher last year if she were confined in the same classroom with John for six hours a day.

It isn't until after lunch that John makes his first fatal mistake, when he refuses to do his share of cleaning up the lunchroom tables and floor. The elementary-age kids are organized into crews for accomplishing this necessary task (the school has no custodial staff). Each crew has its own day of the week, with an older student serving as crew chief. Here, participation is not optional, although with rare exception the kids perform the chore willingly and well.

John, who is quite well-spoken for his age, announces that he doesn't like cleaning and doesn't think he should have to either. To make matters worse, his crew chief is a girl. There's no way this proud young warrior is going to take orders from any girl.

Little does he know that this particular girl is a no-nonsense thirteen year-old who has had plenty of practice dealing with recalcitrant younger siblings at home.

At first it's all a big joke to John. Flashing the same wide grin, which at other times is irresistably charming, he manages to get Janine to chase him around one of the tables a few times. Then, when she closes in on him and demands that he start helping, he suddenly spits at her. With the patience of Job, she warns him several times that she will have to sit on him if he doesn't stop spitting. John only laughs and manages to get off one last goober before he finds Janine's hundred-plus pounds planted firmly on top of him, with his hands stretched out and pinned on either side of his head. Careful not to hurt this much smaller boy, Janine glares down at him and says, "Are you going to stop? I won't get off you until you quit spitting at me and promise to do your damn job."

John manages to keep a smirking game-face on for an impressively long time. Clearly, he's no stranger to passive resistance. Solely in the interest of seeing that the clean-up get done sooner rather than later—Janine is more than up to the challenge of dealing with John—I say to her, "Well, it looks like you may have to sit on him all afternoon, Janine. But don't worry, if you get hungry or thirsty, I'll bring you a little snack when you need one."

For dramatic effect, and with nods and winks between us that John fails to notice, Janine and I discuss her favorite junk foods. That does the trick. John's stubborn "you can't make me" posture is instantly washed away like a sand castle at high tide and he begins to thrash and yell and cry with a raging indignation. When the tantrum reaches its crescendo, John vomits and this immediately brings him back to himself. Like a kind big sister, Janine is sympathetic to John's condition. She helps him clean himself up, and then, when she asks him again if he will do his job, he nods his head yes and heads straight for the bucket and sponge so that he can wipe the table the crew has left for him. Twenty minutes later I see John, for the first time, happily playing outside with a group of kids his own age.

* * * *

I can no longer count how many times I've heard it said: "Children need structure." It has become the punch line to a joke that isn't funny. The statement is usually in reference, of course, to children with emotional, behavioral or cognitive difficulties. And *they* somehow need structure with a capital "S." It's also often an indirect slur against our freewheeling school, which, since we don't grade and test and textbook kids to death, and because we allow them to move about and intermingle freely, and make their own decisions about what they will learn and when, is perceived by some education "experts" as being "unstructured."

Yes, children need structure. Toddlers certainly do. But knowing parents, those who don't want to be constantly on duty or to condition their children into premature rebellion, will "babyproof" the surroundings so that the kids can cruise without hurting themselves or precious household objects. To keep their little ones safe and in bounds, they will put a fence across the stairs rather than around the child. Meanwhile, it's not hard to spot a five-year-old who, once he or she became mobile, was constantly being told, "NO!" There is a look of defiance in the eyes that no kindergarten teacher likes to see coming.

So you won't find a so-called "play-pen" in homes where parents understand children's need to explore. And you won't find the children in electronic corrals—those rooms controlled by big boxes that emanate flashing blue light—either. You also won't find them spending forty to sixty hours a week in the care of strangers, because such parents intuitively understand children's need to bond with their mothers and fathers, or with real mother and father substitutes.

Seldom, however, do we ask what is meant by "structure" when we declare with such authority that all children need it. According to Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*, "structure" simply refers to anything which is "made up of interdependent parts in a definite pattern of organization." As a synonym it lists "gestalt," a word made famous by the late Fritz Perls, the innovative 1960's psychotherapist whose approach was based on mining the depths of individual moments, situations or interactions.

I question here whether the conventional school model has ever lived up to the terms of this definition, or even tried to. The latter half it has down pat: The compulsory, teacher-centered, bell-curve-based schools, where the overwhelming majority of us "get" an education, rely on a standardized pattern of organization that anywhere from one- to two-thirds of its consumers (for that is what they are forced to become) find suffocatingly definite. But, with all of its rigid categories, state or federally mandated imperatives, and absolute, centralized, adult control, hasn't that model done its damnedest to negate the very need for interdependence?

Picture taken at the Free School by Connie Frisbee-Houde

The conventional school model is one almost entirely based on separation: children from their families, from society and from each other; mind from body; task from meaning—the list could go on and on. On the other hand, there is plenty of *de*pendence. The students depend on the teacher to tell them what to do and when, and to assess their effort, behavior and performance. The teachers depend on a bevy of rules, routines and artificial forms of order and authority to maintain control over their mini-domains. But where is the *inter*dependence? Doesn't such a construct imply shared risk and responsibility? Doesn't it suggest interpersonal interaction and mutual endeavor? How much do these qualities truly exist in the conventional classroom?

Less all the time. The states continue to add new standardized tests and other performance criteria every year as though the educational system were a giant machine which could be run with computer-generated engineers' blueprints. As a result, "time on task" has become the credo hanging like a 1984-like banner behind every teacher's desk. Time with each other has virtually been eliminated in some districts and the teacher is more of a harried, result-driven taskmaster than ever before.

From where I sit, it appears increasingly that the standard American classroom has become a large playpen, as it were, with solid instead of nylon mesh walls. They are places of confinement where the learning tasks are broken down into small bits to insure that the students won't choke on them. In such a setting, John, a willful, energetic, highly intelligent and capable boy, was bouncing off the walls from boredom and understimulation. Is it any wonder? To him the "structure" of his previous school was akin to a large cage, with the teacher relating to him as though he were some sort of young wild animal whose impulses had to be guarded against and controlled.

In the Free School we keep the "structure" fluid because we recognize how different children are one from another. We try to let the individual situations and individual children dictate the necessary limits and boundaries, since some require more than others. And because the school is very much a living, breathing community where the children always have a say, the sense of interdependence is always very strong indeed.

So, according to my—and I think Webster's—definition of the term, the structure, or gestalt, when it came time for John to do his share of the lunch clean-up, consisted of John, the unpleasant task and the other members of his crew. When he scoffed at the job, it became the relationship between him and the crew leader; and when he so grossly defied and disrespected her, it became his emotions and hers, and, of course, her superior size, strength, and will. But, John is no wild animal. He knew he was wrong on both counts, and if anything, he was relieved to be set straight so quickly, firmly and compassionately—hence his genuinely happy demeanor immediately following the incident.

Some may disapprove of the apparent "violence" involved in Janine's way of handling the situation. To that I say nonsense. She went only as far as was needed to limit effectively John's out-of-bounds behavior. After all her attempts at reason had failed, she spoke to John in a language every six-year-old can understand, careful not to harm him in the process. It should be noted that

John and Janine are friends now and he does his job faithfully every week.

Freedom in our school means being able to chart your own course and negotiate your own terms. It doesn't mean being able to do whatever you want whenever you feel like it. That is called license. It also means being held accountable for the effects of your actions on those around you. A primary difference between our structure and that of a conventional school is that here we don't have pre-established rules for everything, whose unstated purpose is to eliminate risk and enforce an artificial order. Also, here all authority is not placed exclusively in the hands of the adults. Instead, we allow, and even encourage, children to work out their differences among themselves. Thus, our willful young John, who has already mastered the art of defying adult authority, now has found himself with dozens of new teachers, some even younger than himself.

Meanwhile, if John were back in his old school, or some similar one, he currently would be on Ritalin, and quite possibly one or more other psychoactive drugs—or whatever it took to squelch pharmaceutically his boundless curiosity, his ardently self-centered point of view and his creative ability to resist anything he doesn't think he should have to do. The net effect of these so-called "medications," an Orwellian term if ever there were one in this context, would be to interiorize the school's structure—or in this case, cage. John would find himself in a chemical straitjacket, one from which even an artful dodger like him could not escape.

* * * *

I arrive the next day without the dog, not having come to school directly from home. John detects her absence immediately and calls out, "Hey Chris, where's Lakota?"

"I couldn't bring her with me this morning because I had to go to a meeting. Shall we go get her now?" I reply. He smiles and nods all at once and so off we go to fetch her from my backyard, which is only two hundred feet from the school's.

While we're fetching Lakota, we stop next door at two formerly vacant lots now belonging to the Free School community to visit the goats. We keep three Alpine does (and a small flock of laying hens) for two primary reasons. One is so that our students, many of whom would otherwise never encounter anything more than an occasional dog or cat, can learn basic animal husbandry. The other has to do with an observation I have been making for many years now, which is that angry, flighty, unbonded kids are especially drawn to animals. Somehow such children feel safer with them and then they are slowly able to transfer the affectionate connection they establish with the goats to other human beings. Since the school's goats were all hand-raised by children, they are especially docile and friendly.

After a few minutes in the barnyard, John, Lakota and I head back over to school. This little interlude has given me the chance to ascertain whether or not John is harboring any ill feelings toward me for my support of Janine the previous day. We talk about how unpleasant it is to be sat on, but how it's not really the end of the world either. It's clear to me that John has already put the entire incident behind him.

Back at school John resumes his battery of tests on his personal limits within this exciting new learning environment, which bears so little resemblance to his former school. Today he discovers the woodshop, where a couple of slightly older boys are already at work on a "battleship," a crude representation they are fashioning by themselves out of donated scraps from a local lumber yard. On the workbench rests the pictorial history of World War II (also donated) that has provided the inspiration for the project. I explain the shop rules to John—the first being that only kids who can be trusted are allowed to be in here without an adult—and I conclude with the warning that the very first time he does anything unsafe in the shop he will lose his privileges for that day. As soon as I'm finished, John dives into the woodbox quicker than greased lightning. He selects the two biggest boards, and then, eyes ablaze with concentration, begins trying to hammer them together with the largest nail he can find. As I leave, I close the door between the woodshop and my classroom in order to have enough quiet to continue reading my group a novel we started yesterday.

I am less than optimistic about John's chances of handling the unsupervised freedom of the woodshop at this early stage of the game, and so I keep one ear on what's happening in there. I'm not too concerned because there's been only one accident in the shop in nearly thirty years, and that was when a young teacher cut his finger while using one of the sharp handsaws which we only let the kids use with supervision. Also, the two boys with whom he is in there are both longtime Freeschoolers and I know they won't put up with any shenanigans from John.

After twenty minutes or so, my fears are confirmed. I hear one of the other boys in the woodshop shout, "John, put it down! Didn't you hear what Chris said to you?" This is my cue to return to the stage. I stick my head inside the door and say, casually, "Hey, what's going on?"

"John started banging on our battleship with his hammer," returns Paul, whose raised voice I had heard. "And then when we told him to stop, he waved his hammer around like he was going to hit us."

I glare at John and say to him in an appropriately stern tone, "Young man, hang up that hammer on the pegboard and leave the shop right now! And you're not to come back in here for the rest of the day." He wisely puts up no protest.

Fifteen minutes later, however, I discover John back in the woodshop, hammer in hand once more. This time I make my message even more plain than before. "If I catch you in this shop again today, I will add another day onto your penalty and you won't be allowed to work in here tomorrow, either," I declare, anger rising in my voice. "Do you understand me?"

Again there's no argument, and this proves to be the last time John ventures into the shop today.

* * * *

Some may consider it foolhardy, or even crazy, for a school to allow young children to work in a woodshop without adult supervision. It is, I admit, a policy we adopted only gradually as we discovered that kids can, indeed, be trusted to act responsibly on their own, or to police themselves when one of them begins to get out of line.

There are several reasons why we do it this way. The first is purely logistical. We can't afford to hire a shop teacher, and if we required that there to be an adult on hand at all times, then the students' use of the shop would be much more limited. Meanwhile, kids—particularly those prone to being labeled these days—need to be able to hammer and bang to their hearts' content. It is this kind of active, constructive release which keeps them from flying off the handle, or "acting out," to use the language of conventional educators.

But even this isn't the most important reason. In our frightened world of security guards and surveillance cameras, it is more necessary than ever for children, even quite young ones, to have structures, or gestalts, within their experience where they're *not* being watched, *not* being monitored. How else will they ever learn to act responsibly? It is the only hope for a child like John, who is so heavily predisposed to getting negative attention from others. Until he begins to take ownership of his actions and ambitions, until he begins to weigh the causes and effects of the choices he makes against his own inner standards—so that his motivation to "be good" comes from within as well as from without—his connection with the world is not likely to be a terribly satisfying one. In any event, to try to restrain a willful boy like John with only external controls is a fool's errand. You would practically have to construct a special prison for children in order to do it.

So many of the "Ritalin kids" I have known over the years are a curiously paradoxical mix of advanced abilities and social or physical immaturity. Meanwhile, good teachers down through the ages have understood that the fastest way to turn around immature or irresponsible students is to give them an important task to accomplish independently and then trust them to do it right. My own third grade teacher, Mrs. Lecky, who must have been a thirty-year veteran by the time I reached her class, was a master of this little pedagogical secret. She knew just how to handle me, who most certainly would have been a candidate for Ritalin today. I used to finish my assignments light years ahead of the others and then my eight-year-old fanny would start to burn holes in my seat. During assemblies in the auditorium, I never seemed to be able to keep quiet or sit still. Finally, one day, when my best pal and I kept disrupting the film she was showing, Mrs. Lecky suddenly pulled us from the room. Much to our surprise, she put us in charge of the bookkeeping for the class savings bond program. That task, plus helping out in the textbook storeroom, became our jobs for the rest of the year. She had little trouble with either of us from there on out.

It hadn't escaped me how John's eyes had lit up when I told him he could work in the woodshop whenever he wanted to, as long as he obeyed the rules. There was little doubt in my mind that, probably with a few stumbles along the way, he would soon be able to muster sufficient inner resolve to behave himself in the shop even when he was working there without supervision. His desire to maintain his privileges will provide ample motivation. And should I prove to be right, it will mark the moment when John begins to invent a new self, one intent on seeking out experiences which nourish him instead of one determined to develop newer and better strategies for getting out of things or getting the better of others.

Last year John wasn't a student, he was a prisoner, the captive of a system founded on compulsion and Skinnerian behavior modification. He did what all good soldiers are taught to do in basic training if they are captured in battle: resist the enemy at all costs, refuse to cooperate, and reveal nothing. But since that school was a private one, it wasn't legally bound to keep John. The principal was free to refuse admission to him the following year, which is exactly what he did. If he had not had that option, then he would have insisted that John be drugged, a much subtler, but equally effective way of getting "rid-a-him."

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And, just in case you are tempted to dismiss Chris' belief that we are dealing with the cold-blooded (but not conspiratorial!) invention of a disease requiring the use of drugs in schooling as lacking objective validiation, we include an article on the subject by an MD and following, two reviews by Chris of current books about ADD. This article comes from the English periodical, The Ecologist. *Could it be that some English doctors are more truthful than most of their American counterparts?:*

CHILDHOOD AS DISEASE

by Dr. Edward Hamlyn

In February 1979 the Food and Drug Administration of the United States of America ordered the elimination of a diagnostic term as being unscientific. The disease was called Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD) and its manifestations were so described as to embrace a condition called childhood. Every American child could fit the diagnosis and the treatment for this disease is Ritalin.

The psychiatrists of America in collusion with Ciba, who hold the patent rights for Ritalin, had invented a disease in order to sell a product. Their product is a drug of addiction and the disease called Minimal Brain Dysfunction can be diagnosed as early as the age of two years.

The disease was called Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD) and its manifestations were so described as to embrace a condition called childhood.

With American youth hooked on Ritalin, the sales of Ritalin for Ciba would be assured for ever. Ciba themselves admit that the withdrawal symptoms from Ritalin include insanity, suicide, attempted homicide and homicide.

As a result of the intervention by the FDA, the name of the disease has been changed but "new facts" have been added to the description of the disease. It is now called Attention Deficit Disorder, and the concept plus Ritalin has been exported to Britain. A psychiatrist called Dr. Christopher Green is touring

Britain giving lectures in which he explains to the authorities that this disease is caused by a gene which damages the brain. Families who produce these children are genetically defective and are the source of tomorrow's criminals, according to the psychiatrist.

And thus we are reminded that modern science has acquired the fixed idea that human behaviour is determined by the chemistry of the brain and that all mental illness is due to a deficiency of some drug or other which if not yet discovered will be, if enough money is spent on research.

Any protest to such a mechanistic and materialistic belief in Man's true nature is met by the scientist's Nobel Prize-winning DNA expert called Francis Crick, who has now discovered the soul. Since the days of Professor Wundt, the originator of American Psychiatry, Academe has accepted that psychology must be the study of the psyche in the absence of a psyche.

Ciba themselves admit that the withdrawal symptoms from Ritalin include insanity, suicide, attempted homicide and homicide.

But now the psyche has been rediscovered and according to Crick it is an electric circuit in the frontal lobe of the brain. Professor Crick now has the potential ability to lift the lid off his skull and with a couple of mirrors take a peek into his head and see his own soul. Can you not see how insane and dangerous has become the practice of preserving ignorance by inventing knowledge?

Education: an archaic, patriarchal, authoritarian system, designed to reduce the capabilities of children so that they will be able to cope with living in society with adults.
—Garry Thompson in *Astral Sex—Zen Teabags; an Illustrated Encyclopedia of New Age Jargon.*

And here are Chris' reviews:

All About Attention Deficit Disorder

by Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D.
1996 by Child Management, Inc.
Glen Ellyn, IL
172 pages (paper)

The Myth of the A.D.D. Child

by Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D.
1995 by Penguin Putnam
New York, NY
305 pages (paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

The labeling and drugging of schoolchildren is a hotly debated topic of late, and since these two books take diametrically opposed positions on the subject, I thought it a good idea to review them side by side, as it were, and let the two experts go at it *mano a mano.* I will make little effort to veil my own personal bias on an issue which is of increasing concern to me as a teacher in an inner-city school.

For starters, both of the authors are men, both are named Thomas, both have Ph.D.s, and both learned their trade by working with kids suffering from the so-called syndrome they both now write about. But here ends any readily apparent common ground that might lie between them.

As a child psychologist specializing in something he calls "child discipline," Thomas Phelan has been in the Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) business for twenty-five years. The father of an "ADD child," Phelan is definitely a true believer. Quoting the good doctor from a brochure promoting his Child Management Institute:

> ADD is a pervasive, non-curable condition that, in its worst forms, can cause failure in school, discord in the family, and social maladjustment.

Thomas Armstrong, on the other hand, who began as a special education teacher before finding widespread success as a writer on the subject, is the doubting Thomas. In this, his sixth and most popular book to date, he writes:

> ADD *does not exist;* these children are *not* disordered (emphasis his). They may have a different style of thinking, attending, and behaving, but it's the broader social and educational influences that create the disorder, not the children.

Who does one believe here, especially if one happens to be the parent of a rambunctious, high-speed youngster who is starting to become the butt of complaints from the teacher because he or she—usually he—won't sit still and do as he's told in the classroom?

Perhaps it is necessary, first, to examine how each of the two men tackles the question of causation of the various behaviors which drive many teachers, as well as some parents, to distraction (pun intended). This brings us to one more subtle piece of common ground between Phelan and Armstrong that I failed to pick up on right away: Both authors strenuously avoid delving into the emotional lives of children when they explore possible causes of so-called "disorders" like ADD or its many kissing cousins: hyperactivity, hyperkinesis, behavior disorder, learning disorder, learning disability, minimal brain damage, or reaching way back in time, dyslexia. Words such as anger, rage, and grief appear to be absent from their vocabularies. So do terms like racism and dehumanization, the side-effects of which are surely a factor in many cases involving urban children.

On causation, Thomas Phelan states very clearly that adopting a psychological approach to understanding why some kids appear overly impulsive or aggressive, won't pay attention, are slower to learn to read, and so on, only arouses "unnecessary guilt" in their parents. Parents of affected children, he says, have heard enough of theories based on the idea that "screwy parents make screwy kids" (his words). No, writes Phelan in his brief and catchy book, which the American Library Association Booklist calls, "A must—a lucid resource that can help individuals of all ages," the cause of ADD is entirely mechanical. It is generated by a biochemical imbalance in the brain that results in a shortage of the neurotransmitters that enable the brain to regulate its own activities, such as paying attention. Quoting Dr. Phelan:

> There may be certain brain centers that serve a "governing" function, that is, they regulate the rest of the brain and the activities of the child in general. Imagine, for example, that a governor of a state was lazy, drank constantly, and spent all day in bed. The state itself would be a mess. People would fight, rob each other, not pay taxes. The schools, police, post office, and other services would be terribly inefficient. Chaos would result.

Who says a little knowledge isn't dangerous?

Thus, according to Phelan, the brains of ADD children simply have "lazy governors," and therefore, the reason that stimulant "medications"—in this context a 1984ish term if ever there were one—"work" so well is that they "stimulate" these slothful brain managers into doing their job better.

Or better still, concludes Phelan, let's just call ADD hereditary and leave it at that. On this point he cites "research" which shows that more than one-third of the parents of ADD children were once ADD kids themselves. Tempting, isn't it, to toss such a complex and controversial human phenomenon, one so fraught with emotional and sociological implications, into the old genetics bin?

Over to you, Dr. Armstrong:

> To close one's eyes to the important role society has in defining deviance risks falling into the same kind of trap as Samuel A. Cartwright, a well-respected Louisiana physician and American Medical Association member who felt he had discovered a new "disease" during the 1850s in pre-Civil War America. After conducting a study on runaway slaves who had been caught and returned to their Southern owners, Cartwright concluded that the slaves were suffering from *drapetomania* (*drapeto,* to flee; *mania,* craze), a disease that caused them to flee. In a written report to the Louisiana Medical society, Cartwright wrote: "With the advantages of proper medical advice, strictly followed, this troublesome practice that many Negroes have of running away can almost entirely be prevented."

Armstrong does not dispute that some children in America are so out of balance that they make life difficult for themselves as well as those around them. But unlike his counterpart in this review, he spends an entire chapter asking why so many kids—as many as two million at last count—are currently diagnosed with ADD, and then are administered a wide range of powerful psychoactive drugs such as Ritalin, Dexedrine, Cylert, Tofranil, Prozac, Clonodine, Tegretol, lithium, and Mellaril. He begins by questioning the validity of the diagnostic process itself, pointing out that the Orwellian tests that are given to kids to determine whether or not they "have" ADD measure only a very narrow range of intelligence and ability—and are totally devoid of real-life relevance. Armstrong cites a study conducted in the Netherlands where a group of "hyperactive" children and a control group of "normal" kids were intentionally presented with irrelevant information on a task to see if they would become distracted from the central task. The "hyperactive" children didn't become any more distracted than the control group, leading researchers to conclude that there appeared to be no "attention deficit" in the "hyperactive" kids.

Armstrong himself concludes that the "ADD myth" is essentially an indicator of a paradigm that incorporates certain core assumptions about humanity as a whole. As we saw in Dr. Phelan's theory of causation, which, by the way, is the ADD industry's official party line, the ADD paradigm views human beings as machines. This leads straight into the standard AMA model, one always oriented toward pathology and disease. And, of course, little white (or pink or blue) pills.

Ultimately, Armstrong sees ADD as a social invention. Here he follows up the above quote about deviance with the words of Ivan Illich from *Medical Nemesis*:

> Each civilization defines its own diseases. What is sickness in one might be chromosomal abnormality, crime, holiness, or sin in another. For the same symptom of compulsive stealing one might be executed, tortured to death, exiled, hospitalized, or given alms or tax money.

American school culture, Armstrong suggests, is based entirely on the Protestant work ethic which holds unquestioning obedience, absolute rationality, delayed gratification, and swift and sure punishment for deviance as central values. Isn't it ironic, though, that in England, the motherland of this time-honored code of existence, very few children are labeled and drugged for not conforming to the status quo in school?

Perhaps Armstrong provides an answer to my question when he proposes that, here at home, what we call ADD is actually a symptom of "societal breakdown." By this he means that for the past several decades our society has been undergoing a rapid upheaval in values, with old forms of authority no longer carrying the weight they used to, leaving the current generation lacking in the automatic respect for teachers shared by previous generations. And then there is the effect of the breakdown of the family on children, as well as the multitude of other stresses they face today. For instance, cites Armstrong, almost a million reports of child abuse or neglect are now recorded every year, and nearly twenty percent of America's sixty-three million youth receive mental health treatment. Here, Armstrong hints ever so briefly at a possible link between so-called "hyperactivity" and depression, but as I've already said, he fails to explore the relationship between children's emotional states, and how they feel about themselves and the world around them, and their behavior and performance.

Instead, Armstrong chooses to keep the discussion on higher ground, at the macro level of culture and society. He talks about our short-attention-span culture, boring classrooms, "bad fits" between parents and children, the gender differences between boys and girls and how schools favor the latter—all of which certainly contribute to the problem at hand.

What was never made clear to me in my reading of *The Myth of the A.D.D. Child* is the distinction between the creative, misfit children who are being marginalized by a society wishing to mass-produce conformity and the kids who are suffering from genuine distress—and why. The solution to any problem depends on how the problem is defined in the first place. Since Armstrong spends over two hundred pages outlining "fifty ways to improve your child's behavior and attention span" (inspired by the little book, *Fifty Things You Can Do to Save the Earth*), I wish he had spent a little more time trying to pick apart this growing snarl. His suggestions are all valid ones, but his persistent ambiguity leaves him mired in the same mainstream that, in my book, created the "problem" in the first place.

As much as I am grateful to Armstrong for swimming so strenuously against the current by exposing this notion of ADD, et al, for what it is—*a myth*—I still want to challenge him on two more critical points. For the first, let me refer us back to his initial quote above, where he says it's the broader social and educational influences that create the disorder, and not the children. If only he had said it's the broader social and educational influences that *are disordered*, not the children. I don't think this is just a matter of splitting semantic hairs. Like Phelan, Armstrong has been in the ADD business for quite a while, and perhaps, as a result, has adopted the lingo more than he realizes. He probably doesn't intend it, but by using 'disorder' as a noun and not as a verb, it seems to me he runs the risk of falling into the same trap that he tries so valiantly and lucidly (to use the language of the ALA Book List) to oppose. By referring to a "disorder" that certain children *have* called ADD, even though he believes that its causes lie in "influences" outside these children, it seems to me he is still blaming the victim, though surely to a far lesser extent than ardent defenders of the faith like Thomas Phelan.

Which brings me to the biggest bone I have to pick with Thomas Armstrong. He approves of the use of the aforementioned drugs—controlled substances which have numerous known side effects, both physiological and psychological—*in some cases.* While he does cushion his position with the usual disclaimers: the drugs should only be administered under the watchful supervision of a physician, and only in conjunction with other forms of intervention such as counseling, tutoring, changing school types and so on, he still condones the drugging of certain children who are struggling to grow up and to make sense of a world which makes less sense every day. He even takes it a step further and puts down anyone who might oppose the use of drugs to manage children's behavior, when he writes in the preface about how put off he is by those who are attracted to his book "because they feel that Ritalin is poisoning our children's minds (like fluoride in the water system!)." But then again, as they used to say on Firesign Theater, "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you."

Once more, Armstrong's position differs only in degree from that of Phelan, who also lists the same disclaimers, in that he is much less willing to avoid what Phelan dismisses as a "psychological" approach and much more reluctant to advocate for a psycho-pharmaceutical one.

My concern here is that Armstrong is conceding precious territory. Perhaps he isn't aware that, as Dr. Robert Coles warns in a new preface to *The Mind's Fate,* twenty-first century psychology and, by extension, psychotherapy, is going to be entirely based on biochemistry and chemical solutions to psychic distress. In other words, Aldous Huxley's brave new world is about to arrive centuries ahead of schedule (he predicted six). Coles goes on to point out that we are already witnessing the arrival of a new generation of clinical psychologists and psychotherapists who no longer undergo their own analyses, a fundamental training requirement ever since Sigmund Freud and others invented this new science of the psyche. What current and future generations will be schooled in instead, according to an alarmed and saddened Coles, is how to correlate the client's "condition" with the proper label, and then how to prescribe the right pharmacological cocktail to keep the symptoms in check. That's it; *soma*, here we come.

And perhaps no one informed Dr. Armstrong that last year over 600,000 teenagers were prescribed Prozac or other antidepressants—*a 46% increase* over the year before. The adolescent market is now the leading edge of the nearly two billion dollars in annual Prozac sales in the U.S. Precious territory indeed.

Have I made my bias clear enough? Now read the two books and decide for yourselves.

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Orin Domenico, whose article follows, sends us the following bio:

> *A full time high school English teacher and part-time college instructor, Orin came to teaching ten years ago after a long career as a lost soul and itinerant carpenter. He holds an MAT from Colgate University and has twice been awarded NEH fellowships for literary studies. Orin brings to his teaching a passionate love for literature and language. His thinking has been greatly influenced by his study of African-American literature and music and by Robert Bly, James Hillman, and the mytho-poetic wing of the men's movement. He writes poetry and is an avid amateur photographer. Married for twenty years, he is the father of four children, and by the time this appears, most likely, the grandfather of one. He is currently working with a small dedicated group of visionaries to establish an alternative middle and high school in the center of Utica.*

Transmitting Life: Revisioning Professionalism in Teaching

by Orin Domenico

Preface:

As I completed this third [Note: the first essay, "Revisioning Discipline," appeared in the winter issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ—the second will appear in the spring issue of the JFL, *ed.] in a continuing series of essays on educational reform, I felt the need to say a few things directly to readers about the writing style that I see evolving in these pages. That style, I can now see, is closely related to content.*

First, I am aware that these essays are heavy on abstract ideas and light on practical suggestions. I am more interested in the ideas that guide our decisions than I am in just how a classroom or class should look or run. Ideas are far more powerful and influential than we often realize. The futility of so many of our reform efforts comes from the fact that we tinker with classroom procedures without changing the underlying (driving) assumptions. A set of reductive ideas has produced our current social and educational reality, and only a new set of ideas will change it. Furthermore, what I am suggesting is a movement away from from mechanistic and reproducible approaches, toward a recognition of education as something idiosyncratic and *essentially mysterious. My approach is anti-pedagogical and anti-curricular.*

Second, my allusions and references are predominantly to poets and visionaries rather than to educational philosophers and reformers, to Rumi, Blake, and Whitman, rather than to Dewey and Whitehead. I could see some readers characterizing my ideas as Liberal or New-Agey, but I think of my principles as being essentially conservative. I am interested in the restoration of Soul and Imagination to education. These are ancient ideas, deeply embedded in our tradition, which are being discarded and lost in this brave new reductive world. To restore vision and imagination, we must be visionary and imaginative. I don't worry much about being reasonable and pragmatic, for we have allowed ourselves to be shackled for too long by an over-reliance on reason and pragmatism.

Finally, I confess to a tendency to set out more ideas than I am able to adequately develop in a given piece. I am particularly prone to do this near the end of any given essay. Rather than cut these, I admit their presence and take them as starting points for new ventures.

> And if, as we work we can transmit life into our work,
> life, still more life, rushes into us to compensate, to be ready
> and we ripple with life through the days.
>
> Even if it is a woman making an apple dumpling, or a man a stool,
> if life goes into the pudding, good is the pudding,
> good is the stool,
> content is the woman with fresh life rippling in to her,
> content is the man.
>
> Give and it shall be given unto you
> is still the truth about life.
> But giving life is not so easy.
> It doesn't mean handing it out to some mean fool, or letting the living dead eat you up.
>
> It means kindling the life-quality where it was not,
> even if its only in the whiteness of a washed pocket-handkerchief. (105)
>
> from "We Are Transmitters" —D.H. Lawrence

I work as a teacher. When I say that out in public I have a tendency to recoil into a defensive posture as I'm forming the words. Teachers, as a group, are under attack from all sides, and our response both as individuals and as a group is often to get defensive. I see this defensiveness in the letters that teachers write to our local paper in response to regular attacks from citizens who are outraged at their rising school taxes, at "soaring" teachers' salaries, and falling student test scores. Since in other areas of my life, marriage, family and friendship I have found defensiveness to be a most counterproductive reaction to criticism, I cannot believe it will prove effective in resolving the deepening conflict that we teachers find ourselves at the center of.

Defensiveness, first of all, is not a response, but rather a reaction (usually knee-jerk) to a perceived attack. I say not a response because response suggests that we have listened to the other, have taken in and reflected on their words before answering. (The Latin root is *spondere*, to promise or pledge; so, in a sense, to respond implies a certain keeping of faith with the other.) I say "perceived attack" because, since we haven't really listened, what the other has said often proves not to be a direct attack on us at all. Secondly, defensiveness is usually indicative of the fact that the other has struck a nerve; we may feel guilty because we know there is some truth in what they have said, truth that we have no desire to look at. Finally, defensiveness may also be symptomatic of our inability to face the anger of others. In America, where so few of us have dealt with our own anger, it is often very difficult for us to allow others to have theirs, especially when we feel it directed toward us.

I began this essay with the intent to first look briefly at the full range of monetary and job tenure issues, that tend to dominate this debate, as a prelude to what I really wanted to talk about. But with our education system in full-blown crisis, whether or not teachers get paid too much or even how they keep their jobs or lose them, are important matters, but not main issues. (For the record, I do not hold typical teacher's positions on these matters. I oppose the tenure system as it is currently set up, and I believe that teachers have made a major mistake in allowing their unions to be little more than self-serving bargaining units fighting for salary increases and maintenance of benefits and the tenure system instead of leading the fight to save our children from the abuses of the oppressive compulsory school system.)

The crisis in education is not occurring in a vacuum; it is part of the crisis of family life, the crisis of community life, the crisis of our economy and government as we slip away from democracy toward corporate oligarchy. We cannot discuss education in a meaningful way without considering its part in the brave new world that is being created. We need to reconsider what we are educating our children for: the purpose of education. We need to ask again, what really matters? Teachers need to do some serious thinking about what masters they want to serve.

As an English teacher and poet, one of the things that I love to do is to play with words, to inspect them and dissect them, to roll them deliciously on my tongue, to savor their onomatopoeic splendor, to pull them apart, implode and explode them, uncover their roots and the connotative baggage they carry. Such word play was the natal impulse of this essay. The word "professional" is at the heart of the rather silly debate about teaching that goes on nearly continually in the letters to the editor column in our local paper.

The critics contend that it is ridiculous to call teachers professionals in the same sense that we use the word to describe doctors and lawyers, who go through long and rigorous training to receive certification. Teachers react defensively and desperately try to make the case that their certification process is indeed comparable. They have to do unpaid student teaching which is "comparable" to a doctor's internship. They have to take the National Teacher's Exam (NTE) which is "commensurate to a bar exam." They have to earn a Masters degree within five years of beginning teaching, and they have to "earn" tenure through a three-year probationary period of "grueling close observation and supervision."

Furthermore, a recent letter claims, "most teaching professionals continue their education beyond the degrees/certification and tenure. Their invaluable time and money is spent to remain current with the new teaching standards and technology." Aside from the humor of anyone wanting to voluntarily "jump in bed" with doctors and lawyers these days, the contention of equivalency is ludicrous.

First of all, education courses are for the most part both notoriously easy and a notorious waste of time. (It is no coincidence that many college jocks are education majors.) The time and money spent on teacher training, in most cases, would be much more wisely spent on more thorough preparation, including real-world practice, in one's subject area and on long-term therapy to free teachers from unconscious impulses from their own childhoods, before they begin inflicting them on children.

Secondly, the NTE is a cinch. Anyone with a reasonable liberal arts education should be able to pass it easily. I had taken no courses in education history or law and used common sense to guess my way through the professional knowledge segment of the exam. If an exam could do anything to stem the tide of mediocrity in teaching this one certainly wouldn't be the instrument needed.

Thirdly, the granting of tenure has nothing to do with teaching ability. Teachers are for the most part not observed all that closely during their probationary period because what they are actually being evaluated for is very easy to see: can they control their students, do they maintain order? I don't have any statistics, but years of observation have shown me that tenure is never denied for lack of knowledge or real interest in your subject area or for incompetent teaching. The only reasons I have seen tenure denied are for failure to control classes and obvious emotional imbalance.

Finally, the idea of teachers staying "current" almost always means keeping up with new teaching lingo, the sort of doublespeak that proliferates in all bureaucracies. Most of the course work that practicing teachers go through is in education, usually in pursuit of administrative certification. Courses and workshops offered through teachers' centers and BOCES focus on classroom methodology, discipline, student evaluation, and the use of new technologies. These are courses that buy into the teaching game, rather than question the ways our schools and classes are set up or the basic educational assumptions that we practice under. Very few working teachers continue to take rigorous courses in their subject area or continue to read or practice in it either.

Before I go on, I need to say that it is not my intent here to crucify individual teachers. I know many dedicated teachers who work very, very hard and who really care about their students. Most people go into teaching with noble intentions—but good intentions are not enough. We are working in a system that is inflicting severe damage on American children and on what is left of our democracy, and *we* must take some responsibility for changing (or if necessary destroying) that system. With that in mind I propose a new way of looking at ourselves as professionals.

When teachers call themselves "professionals" they are using the word in the sense that is used to describe practitioners of an occupation requiring extensive education, not in the more limited sense that describes anyone who is engaged in an activity to gain a livelihood. In teaching circles you will often hear talk of wanting "to be treated like professionals," or of maintaining "a professional attitude." Quite frankly, I find most of this talk rather pretentious; to want to be treated with respect is one thing; to expect an unearned deference another. What do we gain from calling ourselves professionals? We are, I guess, differentiating and distancing ourselves from non-professional teachers—those who have no formal training in the profession. However, a strong case can be made for the notion that teaching requires no special training, only expertise in a field of knowledge and a desire to share it with others.

Interestingly, the higher one goes in academia, the more the emphasis shifts from teacher preparation (training) to higher degrees and accomplishments in one's field as qualification to teach. Great universities, particularly in the arts, will hire teachers who have no degrees if they are sufficiently accomplished in their field of endeavor. (I have a friend, a high school dropout, who teaches jazz piano at the three most prestigious colleges in our area.)

Throughout history to the present moment we have a marvelous record of learning and accomplishment in all fields that has gone on quite independently of professional teaching. Study the lives of the great achievers in any field of endeavor and you will find a record of self-education (autodidactism), apprenticeship, mentorship and—primarily—of passion and self-discipline. In fact, a pretty strong case can be made that the training of professional teachers and the simultaneous rise of compulsory schooling in the United States have brought about the destruction of what was a very effective democratic education "system." (John Taylor Gatto seems to be engaged in making that case quite well in his forthcoming book *The Empty Child.).*

I would suggest that the idea of the professional teacher—the idea that we can, indeed must, train people to teach—is so transparently false that even we teachers are actually quite uncomfortable with calling ourselves professionals. We know, if we are honest with ourselves, that what we learned in teacher training is irrelevant, that what we know about teaching, if we know anything, we have picked up in practice. We look around us and see that some few of our colleagues teach quite well and that most of them are quite mediocre (we already knew this as students) and that the differences among them have nothing to do with anything learned in teacher education. So the appellation "professional" becomes little more than a justification for special treatment, like tenure and the step system of regular promotion and raises. Hence the defensiveness and discomfort I spoke of above.

But, before we abandon the term "professional" let us see if it might still prove useful if we consider it from a different perspective. According to etymologist Eric Partridge, our modern English word "profess" is a back-formation from the Middle English word "professed" which meant "bound by a religious vow." The older Latin roots of the word are in the verb "*profiteri*, to declare." *Profiteri* is formed from the prefix "pro," meaning "before," and the verb "fateri" meaning "to admit" or "confess." A profession was then a public declaration or confession, a professor "a (public) teacher."

What I am suggesting is that we make the taking up of the profession of teaching something akin to the taking or professing of religious vows. I personally find this idea of professing useful in two very distinct ways: first in relation to our chosen discipline (e.g. English, math, science, history) and second in relation to the work we do with children. But before I develop either notion, I need to say a little about the assumptions about work that I bring to this paper. When I talk about work, I am speaking in the older sense of "life's work," or vocation (calling)—that which we were "put" on earth to do—*not* in the contemporary sense of work as job or career, a tiresome but necessary burden that one must endure as some punishment for the original sin of being born human. I believe, as Freud did, that what we must do to be happy, well-adjusted adults is to find real work and real love. I believe, as James Hillman does, that it is more useful to speak of a work "instinct" rather than a work ethic. The latter implies that we readily take up the burden (or punishment) of work, the former that our hands need real work to do.

I believe still, as I professed many years ago in my catechism class, that I was created to "know, love, and serve God in this world," and that I serve God by using the gifts that God gave me to serve the communities (the Sacred Hoops, as Ogalala Sioux shaman Black Elk called them) that I am a part of. Real work is always creative, makes us co-creators, participants in the ongoing creation or evolution of the Universe. Real work is transformative—transforming both the worker and the world. We face the broken world and humbly seek to do God's will for us in it. This may sound simple-minded to those who do not know that the invitation to "follow me" is not an invitation to a life of ease. Following God's will requires a fierceness; doing real work in the broken world will, no doubt, stir things up and may very well get us in trouble. This is the perspective I bring to the discussion of the work of teaching and to this revisioning of professionalism.

Profession to Discipline:

> But tell me, can you do the Good Work
> without a teacher? Can you even know what it is
> without the Presence of a Master? Notice how
> the lowest livelihood requires some instruction.
>
> First comes knowledge, then the doing of the job.
> And much later, perhaps after you're dead,
> something grows from what you've done.
>
> Look for help and guidance in whatever craft
> you're learning. Look for a generous teacher,
> one who has absorbed the tradition he's in. (69)
>
> —Rumi

The first suggestion that I would make toward the revisioning of professionalism in teaching is that before we ever come to consideration of teaching we need to profess to our discipline. We cannot be the "generous teacher" that Rumi speaks of until we have "absorbed the tradition" of our particular "craft." This profession needs to be a commitment, a giving of ourselves that is akin to marriage or religious vows. In a world which has surrendered to moral tepidity and occupational lukewarmness, our ardor (from the Latin *ardere*, "to burn") and fervor (from the Latin *ferere*, "to boil") are desperately needed. We can, as I have said elsewhere, only teach what we ourselves practice, what we ourselves are. Art teachers need to paint and sculpt; music teachers to play and compose. English teachers need to write and to continually immerse themselves in Literature. History teachers need to be practicing historians, math teachers practicing mathematicians. It is not enough to have once studied a discipline as an undergraduate or graduate student. Such study does not constitute an initiation into a discipline.

We must become practicing disciples, initiates seeking mastery in our chosen field. To chose a field in this sense is an act of love, a committing of our lives to a purpose, to a path toward truth (from the Icelandic *tryggth*, "faith"). D. H. Lawrence said that the difference between a boy and a man is that a man has purpose. To take on any discipline seriously is a path to real adulthood (a rare commodity in our adolescent society), for such practice demands self discipline, acceptance of personal mortality and a letting go of childish perfectionism and self pity.

One clear implication of this approach to profession is that we would not have young people choosing teaching as a primary career. The movement to teaching, at least on the secondary level, would come only after one had already achieved some success in one's chosen discipline. (I am reminded of C. G. Jung's Institute in Zurich, where Jung would only accept individuals to study to be Jungian therapists who had already successfully pursued another career. I presume that Jung understood that therapists, like teachers, need the deepening that the practice of a discipline brings.)

Another implication of this taking up of discipline is that we need to reconsider how teachers are expected to spend their time. I would suggest that the practicing of one's discipline is not only a legitimate use of a teacher's in-school time but also a necessary one. First, as any real disciple knows, practice is not optional; we wither, dry out, fade if we stop. The poet William Stafford said that he would give up everything he had written for the next one; that is the only attitude for artists to have, and we must all be artists if we would teach. Secondly, our students need to see us at our practice, need to witness our struggles and our passion, need to stand close to the fire. We need to invite them to practice alongside of us with the risk that they might at times outstrip us. They need also to see us being scholars, researching and studying what we love. The Jewish-American writer Anzia Yezierka tells of how in the old country the people understood the necessity to the community of supporting the Rabbinical class that spent all of its time studying the Talmud or the mysteries of the Cabala, but that in America the tradition was quickly lost as the scholar-Rabbis were soon regarded as men too lazy to work for a living. We are in dire need of a return to the old ways. How can we teach scholarship if we do not actively practice it?

School as it is presently set up does not allow for disciplined practice or scholarship. I cannot legitimately work at these essays or my poetry or my research at school and even if I could, there would be no time for it. I am expected to keep myself and my students constantly busy. I realized after a year or two of teaching that grades were our real product. We are kept busy producing grades, quizzing and testing, ranking our students, and providing ample evidence to justify the outcomes. Our other pressing, time-consuming business is control. We spend much of our time at various control missions: attendance, detention, study halls, lunch duty, etc., etc., etc. *ad infinitum*. I would suggest that the practice of our disciplines is much more important, and would prove a more fruitful, use of our time. Teachers' unions might take up the fight for real freeing up of school time, something way beyond the current move to block scheduling.

Profession to Children

In his prophetic book, *The Sibling Society*, Robert Bly asks us to open our eyes to the plight of the children of America. We have left them to raise themselves in a moral wasteland. We have abandoned them to the predations of the insatiable monster that is our corporate culture of consumerism, a beast that feeds on the souls of children. Instead of protecting them from the monster, we turn them over to public schools that currently serve as little more than cages where they are fattened for the kill. (This last idea is mine not Bly's.) Bly describes this abandonment of children again in his poem, "Anger Against Children":

> Parents take their children into the deepest Oregon
> forests,
> And leave them there. When the children
> Open the lunchbox, there are stones inside, and a note
> saying, "Do Your Own thing."
> And what would the children do if they found their way
> home in the moonlight?

> The planes have already landed on Maui, the parents are
> on vacation.
> Our children live in fear at school and in the house.
> The mother and father do not protect the younger child
> from the savagery of the others.
> Parents don't want to face the children's rage,
> Because the parents are also in rage. (58)

We may have entered teaching with a deep desire to work with and help children, but whatever our good intentions we will be agents of the anger Bly writes of, if we work unconsciously in the public schools. We can no longer afford to naively accept the system's assurances that everything we do there is being done for the good of the kids. Alice Miller, the German psychoanalyst, who has written extensively about the violence done to children by Western child-rearing practices, says that we, as adults, will continue to inflict our unconscious rage on children until we see clearly what was done to us in our own childhoods. We teachers, who work closely with children every day, must be awake to our own wounds and must open our eyes to what we are doing.

Those that have begun this awakening know that it is a long and at times painful process. We know also that the path is a difficult one to stay on and that we need help along the way. The aid of a therapist who has been down the path before us is invaluable. I would suggest that another valuable aid in this healing movement toward what we might call wholeness is the making of deep and lasting commitments like marriage. Holding faithfully to such commitments helps to keep us honest with ourselves, brings us continually back to those broken and rent parts of ourselves that most need healing.

The English verb "commit" comes from the Latin verb *committere*, "to send, hence, put together, hence, to entrust to, hence also, to undertake, to risk." If children are to be entrusted to us as teachers, then we must make a deep commitment to them and to their welfare, and this commitment is, as all real commitments are, risky. So I am suggesting that the second sense in which we teachers might call ourselves professional is in our profession—binding as if by religious vows—to children. This means we must make real the currently empty platitude that "children come first" in our schools.

We can no longer be committed first to protecting our careers and the system we work for by playing it safe, by not telling the truth, by closing our eyes and ears to the inadequacy and abuse that continually surrounds us. A teacher that I know told me recently that he loved teaching and wanted to be the first $100,000 teacher in his district. Now we may or we may not find this statement outrageous, but don't we teachers belong to unions that act as if the continual advancement of our salaries is the most important issue in education? The primary business of our unions, as they currently operate, has been to protect our financial well-being, and in the interest of that protection we have allowed them to propagate, in our names, the transparent fallacy that more money is always the key to better education. I recently visited the Albany Free School, a small private school in the heart of the city that has operated for nearly thirty years now with few monetary resources.

Here a group of competent and committed teachers do wonderful work nurturing life in kindergarten through eighth-grade children for $180 per week. I can hear the protests, "No one can live on that kind of money," but I assure you that they, including families, are doing just that, quite comfortably and happily too.

They are able to do this because, through their commitment to children, they have evolved into a life-affirming community. Together they have helped sustain life in a decaying urban neighborhood that was being allowed to die. Together they have found ways to solve the problems of living in our materialistic, money-mad culture, without compromising their values. This is essential because you can only teach (transmit) to children those values which you embody. I am reminded of the radical education professors at my prestigious grad school who preached education as a path to social change, who had us read Illich and Freire, but who fully embraced an upper-middle-class lifestyle. This approach to social transformation doesn't work; if education is going to transform society, then it must begin with educators transforming themselves and the schools they work in. If we would teach democracy, then our schools must be democratic. If we want to teach values other than blind consumerism, we must live them. Although I am not prescribing vows of poverty, we can no longer put money first.

To put children first means that we can no longer participate unwittingly in the discarding of their souls, which is what we do when we support the current system of schooling that is fixated on extrinsic concerns and that treats children as future cogs in an economic machine rather than as ensouled individuals and members of a sacred community. We have allowed our economic system to serve the interests of profit-takers rather than the interests of the community, and we have allowed our education system to become the servant of that economic system. (To those who object, saying that the corporate world is not getting the skilled workers they need out of the education system, I would suggest that they *are* getting what they need: passive, docile, ignorant, tractable, apathetic consumers, which the current system excels at producing.) To put children first will require a radical rebalancing of our educational priorities with a recognition that the needs of the soul must be addressed. In order to do this, we have to remember, as the Sufi poet Rumi tells us, that "there are two kinds of intelligence." (36)

Our school systems, to the extent that they educate at all, have been solely focused on the first kind of intelligence, the "one acquired, as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says." (36) Rumi tells us that, "with such intelligence you rise in the world. / You get ranked ahead or behind others in regard to your competence in retaining information." (36) This kind of learning, which flows from "outside to inside," he calls "plumbing-learning." Our schools are exclusively concerned with plumbing-learning and with the ranking of children according to its dictates. We unashamedly treat children as if our only concern with them is determining which available slot they will fill in our economic future. We have people called "guidance counselors," whose business is to direct children, like so many electrons, down the appropriate career conduits—this one to the Ivy League, this one to the state college system, this one to tech training, this one to welfare. We discuss the success or failure of our schools in terms of how successful they are at getting kids into college, at preparing them for their economic futures. We totally ignore the second kind of intelligence, and in doing so betray the fact that we are not focused on or concerned with children at all—for to deny them their souls is to deny them their humanity.

The second kind of intelligence Rumi writes of is soul intelligence, "one already completed and preserved inside you. / A spring overflowing its springbox. / A freshness in the center of the chest...a fountainhead from within you, moving out." (36) This description would suggest that we cannot develop a curriculum to educate for soul intelligence, that to allow for it will require a sea-change re-formation of schools far more dramatic than the endless tinkering with curricular and pedagogical concerns that currently passes for school reform. The directions this reformation might take are outside of the scope of this current essay, but it is apparent that to truly put children first will require a bold defiance of the economic imperatives that drive the entire system. It cannot be done by teachers who have sold their own souls in the service of the same imperatives. I believe that we have little choice but to change, for our present path is the road to the victory of death over life. A society that allows the souls of its children to be destroyed cannot long endure, and ours, which is plummeting toward death now, seems determined to take the whole world down with it. So, in a sense, the commitments I am calling us to make are commitments to life.

To teach is to show or guide the way to life. Our duty in relation to our tradition and to our students is, as the poet Stephen Spender wrote, "Never to allow gradually the traffic to smother / With noise and fog the flowering of the spirit." Our "lovely ambition" must be that our "lips, still touched with fire, / Should tell of the spirit clothed from head to foot in song." A big step toward reclaiming our own spirit and becoming transmitters of life might be the making of deep commitments or professions to our disciplines and to our students. Then, we might be truly proud to call ourselves professionals.

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Here's the second chapter of Elizabeth Byrne Ferm's book, **Freedom in Education,** *which is being serialized in ΣΚΟΛΕ starting with her biography by her husband, Alexis C. Ferm, in last summer's issue. Mrs. Ferm's idiom sounds old-fashioned, occasionally even preachy, but it is our strong belief that this pioneer in educational freedom comes from a base of bedrock of truth and understanding of the lives of children that makes her writings equal in wisdom to anything written on children before or since.*

So please be patient with Mrs. Ferm's language, especially in an historical period that denigrates the ancient art of teaching, claiming that only **learning** *is real! This notion may be "politically correct" in alternative, home- and un-schooling circles, but to me it is more likely to be a reflection of ignorance or gender prejudice stemming from the epidemic of BAD teaching that has been either mandated by curricular concerns or mistaken for the real thing in coercive schools! What is required of a teacher is that s/he respect his/her students! That requirement Mrs. Ferm most profoundly demonstrates in this chapter:*

FREEDOM IN EDUCATION

by Elizabeth Byrne Ferm

CHAPTER II

Educator and Child

The relation between the educator and the child is a fundamental relation. No matter what changes may occur in our political, industrial or economic states of society, the relation of the child and the educator will always be as necessary, vital and indispensable to developing human and social life as it has ever been. The relation has had and will continue to have many phases and forms, but the spirit of the relation has never changed. The child manifests the need of an educator very early in his development. He is constantly seeking to attach himself to adult life. The child intuitively turns to adults for the corroboration, connection and relation of the past to the present. Instinctively, he feels those strivings, aspirations and achievements of the race which the adult understands. In his simple direct way, he turns to

Elizabeth Byrne Ferm , teacher, co-director of the Stelton School

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adult life for assurance, recognition and interpretation of human life.

The child expects to find the experiences which have preceded his advent summed up as self-knowledge in the life of the adult. When the child learns that age necessarily does not develop consciousness; that age is often less in touch with the real experiences of life than youth and childhood; that adult life has rarely any understanding of even its own physical need, the child becomes a reactionary and treats adulthood shabbily. He is then inconsiderate, disrespectful. He instinctively expresses contempt for the human who has accumulated wrinkles without thought, failing eyes that have never had a vision, deaf ears that have never heard the message of life. The child is intuitively repelled.

When, however, the child finds himself in conjunction with self-conscious adult life, he inwardly unfolds and develops by leaps and bounds. There is mutual recognition and mutual assurance. The impulses and instincts of the child are verified in the life of the self-conscious adult. Such an adult the child selects as an educator. The child clings to such an adult as a vine clings to an oak. Such an adult is able to interpret to the child the life which the young are facing. In the degree that the adult understands and relates the experiences of his own life, he can in that degree aid and help the developing child in his adventure.

When I use the term educator I trust it will not be confused with that of teacher, and when I refer to education that it will not be confounded with pedagogy. I am not putting new wine into old bottles when I separate education from pedagogy. The pedagogues are the offenders. They usurped the title. Education and teaching are terms so loosely used that many think of them as interchangeable.

Education may include pedagogy, as, for example, when a child asks for a point of information. But pedagogy can not and does not include education. Education is that which has to do with unfolding, revealing and making concrete the inner life, the spiritual life of the individual. That which gives opportunity for the development of the real self in man; that which enables the individual to realize himself physically, mentally and spiritually, as an entity, as a complete whole, is educational. The educator is one who understands the law underlying the instinct, impulse and desire of the child; one who is able to clarify for the child the forces that move the child to action. The educator is an adult who knows—through his own experiences—that within and above the human endeavor, no matter how offensive its expression may be, there is the effort of the real, the true self to express itself in the external.

The educator is the very antithesis of the pedagogue. The educator deals with and integrates for the child his present experience; the relation of the present moment, present hour and present day to the child's life. The educator may refer to the past and future to confirm the present experience of the child and to reveal the continuity of the spirit of life to the child; but never in true education is the past or the future allowed to obscure, influence or govern the now, the here of the child's daily experiences. The educator may supply a very simple need of the child. He may be the story-teller of the neighborhood.

Through the story the adult is able to give the child the history of the spiritual development of the race. The story—to have any real value—must be free from intention to mold or influence the action of the child. It must reveal without moralizing. Children despise stories told with an obvious purpose. I am inclined to think they resent it as a rebuke to their own expression. I recall how children corrected me in my early kindergarten days, when I attempted to influence their lives by holding before them ideal types of humanity. A boy confided to me that he was going "to get even" with another "fellow," who had played a mean trick on him. I stupidly interposed, "Do you think the Christ child would do that?" The boy's face flushed and he impatiently answered, "What do I care about the Christ child? He must have been a funny fellow if he never had a fight." That rebuke opened my eyes a wee bit. I never made that ignorant blunder again.

On another occasion I experimented with a boy and he verified the first boy's position. This boy's mother was a Salvation Army woman. The boy was constantly talking over the religious questions he heard at his home. One day he came to the kindergarten in a very excited state. He said he was going to get a pistol from his uncle, so that he could shoot some boys who wanted to fight him. I said, "Well, Paul, I can't understand how you could shoot at anyone. Didn't Jesus say you must turn the other cheek, and if anyone takes you one mile you must go three." The boy gave me a surprised look and said, "That would be foolish! They'd kill you! This is what you should do: hit them first and then turn the other cheek."

Education cannot be reduced to a system. It cannot be standardized. There is no method for demonstrating its efficiency. Every locality must reveal its educational need in a particular manner. Education is a spiritual union of unconscious youth and conscious age. No degree can make an educator. The spiritual development of adult life is the magnet which attracts and holds the developing child. The bond is an inner one. The fresh impulse of life which the young reveal should confirm the experiences of age and give it a new impetus to life. In exchange age should be able to recognize and assure the child that the "open road" which beckons to him, is safe and sure, though full of adventure.

Educator and child are interdependent and mutually necessary to each other. "To educate one's self and others, with consciousness, freedom and self-determination is a twofold achievement of wisdom. It began with the first appearance of man upon the earth; it was manifested with the first appearance of full self-consciousness in man; it begins now to proclaim itself as a necessary requirement of humanity; and to be heard and heeded as such."

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RETROSPECTIVE MUSINGS:

...from the warm heart of New School of Northern Virginia founder and administrator John Potter:

Mary:

I am sending you this thing I wrote. Feel free to do with it as you wish. It is just one of my many musings on our profession and my life.

Pax,
John Potter

Whatever enters our hearts
or our brains
through our eyes and ears and sense of touch and smell
from the day we are born ...
from the day we were conceived.......
from whatever that day was.....when we began
That is our education.
Of course it keeps on going ....as long as we let it?
We couldn't stop it starting.
Whether it was the primal thadump thadump
which let us know somehow
that we were alive in those small translucent days
Or the first wild and desperate breath we took
of the air we now breathe so matter of factly.

So at the age of four in the little village in which I lived
I ran away to school
hating my parents
not forgetting to drop by my parents' best friends' house
to tell them.......
my parents hated them....
and then on to school.
I knew what the building looked like
from the road
but once inside it was huge and strange and empty.
I pressed my face against a class window
full of children like me, but a bit older.............................
.............and Pauline spotted me

I always liked her for that.
I was invited in and joined a makeshift band
marching around the classroom.
So this was school.
I couldn't wait.

Imagine an examination
that every child in the nation takes
at eleven.
Pass it and you're made
fail it and you're sunk.
At eleven I had moved
from the village
to a farm on the fringe of desolate moorlands
A school with sand toilets outside and open
with single coal stoves at the front of the class
almost a one room schoolhouse for children
from families of little means
- subsistence farmers to gypsies.

Mr. Matthews was a teacher who yearned for
children who wanted to learn
and he seized on Derek and me.
He thought us rebellious and smart
and dug through the dark and frozen turf
his own formal education had laid on his mind
to come up with something which might engage us.
He read to us from *Les Miserables*
so that Javert haunted me for years.
He tried without success
to teach us Latin.
But he sparked our minds
so that when the examination came at eleven
and I had to write an essay for it which had to begin with.............
....."There was a shattering of glass and.................. "
my pen gave my hand whiplash and they had to stop me writing
two hours later.

Six weeks later I was playing with Derek

and the school head sauntered over to us
in the company of Mr. Matthews
and told me to go to Miss Crocker's room, pick up the cane
and go wait by his desk.
I'd done something
I didn't know what
I was very scared
because he'd hit me before
and he hit very hard.
Miss Crocker smiled as she gave me the stick
and I went and waited by his desk.
He came in with a thin smile
behing the fat and distorting lenses of his little glasses,
took the cane
told me
to bend over and grab my ankles
which I did.
As he raised the cane to strike
he told me that I had passed the examination - I was made.
I ran to Derek
I found him in tears
Mr. Matthews had told him he was sunk and cried too.
I could not speak
and felt ashamed that I passed.

Whatever enters our hearts
or our brains
through our eyes and ears and sense of touch and smell
from the day we are born ...
from the day we were conceived.......
from whatever that day was.....when we began
That is our education.

So much had poured into my mind through my senses
that I felt old.
My education had been too much
I felt too much
If, in 1953 they had books on tape and Walkmen
I would have found a cave
and listened to *Les Miserables* until I died.

And John sent a second piece chronicling the birth of his son Sacha:

Neuburg

I have discovered that this town
Is part of me
I have never lived there, and have set foot in it
Two times

Time one:

from Washington, my heart not daring to believe what
My head knew, or thought it did.
A week before I had celebrated my birthday number 44 at a
Hungarian Restaurant - Czisko's I remember with bull's blood wine as red as
Sacha's lips.
It was Saturday
And I was free
At Czisko's I had no thought of Sacha
He was not around
Not in Washington
Not in my head
Not really in theworld.
He simply wasn't.
In fact he was in Neuberg. Somehow,
It seems that Somehow,
We were linked, Somehow,
Related, Somehow,
All along
Forever.
But I didn't have a clue
Sunday Monday Tuesday
my old world persisted..................
Wednesday
he arrived in Neuberg quietly on the pale silver ripples of a December moon
Making their way down the Hudson Valley
And I heard the last leaf of fall gently land in a pool of moonlight
On the window ledge of that hospital room overlooking the river and

I knew the world had changed for me and for him
Yet still I didn't have a clue.
My head did not know my heart very well
And so I was very unprepared for the landing of the leaf in the
moonlight
I know it was a cold night there, clear, but cold and
warm inside the room but
wet with tears which I cannot describe because they were not mine
All I really knew was that he arrived twelve hours after he arrived
And I was to go and meet him on Saturday

And from Wednesday to Saturday was the longest shortest time
in my life
Approaching Christmas
and my firstborn under the star of Neuburg.
The Polar Express arrived to take me away to him and there I sat
Watching the bare trees fly by from Neuburg to Washington

Fortunate indeed the students who receive the blessings of John Potter as guide and as bard! We are grateful for the connection with this gifted teacher/administrator.

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Our favorite Lone Stranger (or uncaped Crusader) John Taylor Gatto, has sent us a copy of a silver bullet he has created for a book project sponsored by the periodical GEORGE, *to be titled "Five Hundred Ways to Make America Better."*

INSTITUTIONAL SCHOOLING MUST BE DESTROYED

by John Taylor Gatto

The easiest way to make America better is to stop spending enormous treasure and human effort on forced schooling of the unprivileged young. By "unprivileged" I mean the bottom 95-90% of our population, not the ghettoized poor. Public education, as it is called, is actually the most fantastic intellectual confidence trick of the century and probably of all time.

Compulsion-schooling was a phenomenon borrowed from Prussia by emerging industrialist classes of the four great coal-producing power's (the U.S., Germany, England, and France) to prepare society for a highly centralized mass-production economy designed to replace the small entreprenurial-agrarian economies of tradition. The development of coal, in conjunction with a reliable steam engine, made such a dystopian polity possible early in the 19th century.

Men could finally be like gods, at least a small section—perhaps five percent—could be because high-speed machinery eliminates *the necessity* of rewarding labor as fully human. The reality of laboring lives and parochial village concerns, upon which graceful lives of wealth had uneasily rested up to that point could finally be discounted for this to happen, several thing had to be managed:

First, an industrial proletariat—a landless, lightly rooted mob—had to be created. This was relatively easy to accomplish in England and on the Continent where freedom traditions were squarely in the hands of a hereditary aristocracy. Where traditions of noblesse existed, they were overthrown by burgeoning commercial, industrial and financial interests.

But in America a powerful economy and society had arisen on the tradition of independent livelihoods fluid social classes and the Reformation doctrine, "Every **man his** own priest." Where elsewhere forced schooling was an underlining of the new moral world developing, in the U.S. it was essential to the *making* of the thing.

Forced schooling in America served a dual function: 1) The creation of a mindless proletariat stripped of its traditions of liberty, independence, fidelity to God, loyalty to family and land. 2) The creation of a professional proletariat, suitably specialized to serve functionally in a highly centralized corporate/bureaucratic economy.

Next, a mass mind had to be created, a mind lacking critical dimension dedicated to the proposition that one got ahead by pleasing authority, and trained to regard advancement principally as the road to increasing one's consumption. Forced schooling was (and is) the vehicle which drove the young to this end. The 20,000 walled and gated communities of America, a number rapidly growing, are only one of the tributes our disintegrating society pays to the class habits learned in school.

Over time, compulsion schooling in America has recreated the English class/caste system under the pretext of concern for the poor, it has dumbed down the American mind, imposing a bell curve artificially on the young as a justification of things as they are. It has crushed the average homeowner with a stupendous burden of taxation to support a world which would have disgusted George Washington, Tom Paine or Thomas Jefferson.

Forced schooling was imposed in America to turn back the promise of America's revolution to free the common man and woman to be whatever they had courage to be, and to dream whatever dreams they pleased. Forced schooling is choking America to death, leveling it to a global standard. God help us.

Institutional schooling must be destroyed.
("Delenda Est Schola Institutionalis." —M. Porcius Gato)

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WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO, DRAW YOU A PICTURE ?

by Robert L. Kastelic, Ed.D.

As a parent, have you ever had this experience? You are talking to your child and trying to make a point and you find yourself staring into a blank face? You sense that your child clearly does not understand you. You try in earnest to 'get through' to the child but with no success. Saying the same thing over and over or saying it louder and louder does nothing but annoy both of you. Eventually, you either give up on the point, or you merely insist and make demands. You claim that someday when they grow up maybe they'll understand and get it. Our parents said similar things and many of us have grown up and we still don't get it. In some limited cases kids do follow through with your requests. When the child does follow through with apparent compliance you perceive that they understand. But, this may not be the case at all. In fact, all the child may be doing is mimicking behaviors, imitating, or simply accommodating you. There may be little real evidence that they are actually comprehending what you intended. In many schooling situation which have rote styled learning this similar kind of result is often the case. Perhaps, that's why so many children respond to the question of what they learned in school today with, "Nothing". However, with some additional information and a few personal adjustments you may find far greater results can occur. By identifying a person's preferred learning style you may find improved results.

"What do you want me to do, draw you a picture?" An often heard question of a frustrated parent or teacher. For many learners, that may be the very best thing one can do. For a visually based learner drawing a picture may reap significant rewards.

Both of our sons are visual learners in many areas. It took a while for us to ascertain this fact but the boys were giving us clues all of the time. When we finally paid attention to how they seemed to learn things best it became rather obvious. If you want to connect the meaning or relationship of an idea it's best to sketch it out for them and they will then build meaning on it for themselves. Not everyone learns things the same way. After years of extensive work researchers determined that learning takes place in a variety of ways and that everyone has a preferred way to learn given a particular situation. Oftentimes we build in frustrations because we do not allow for the variety of personal learning needs. Within a family not everyone learns the same way. Often times we think that if we learned something a certain way everyone can learn it that way too.

However, that is simply not the case. You may have three, or five children all with different preferred learning styles. Also, it is important to note that all learners do not necessarily have the same learning style for every subject area. In other words they don't learn all things the same way. For instance, they may be a visual learner with math problems, a kinesthetic learner in science, and a verbal learner with social studies concepts. You need to check these capabilities out. Then, you need to ascertain the preferred learning styles. Preferred learning styles are not something characteristic of just children either. While teaching University graduate students within their Masters degree programs, I found similar learning struggles. In presenting conceptual frameworks for the Masters level thesis papers I discovered there were some amazing breakthroughs if I included in my descriptions a drawing, or a diagram. Observing Graduate level students having the 'ah ha' expression only confirmed my fears of how many visual young learners were probably getting lost in the maze of auditory instructions at the elementary levels.

A frustrated learner is one who finds it in their best interest to tune out what is going on rather than continue to be frustrated. As an adult you have probably experienced something very similar to these situations. Suppose, you needed to learn something and the only way you could 'get it' or have success understanding it was to pick it up and put it together in a tactile manner. Hands on. Anything else was only continued frustration. When you were able to actually handle it then something clicked in your head and an understanding took place. Sometimes it can be really simple things and sometimes it might be a complex idea. Some people think that they are dumb or stupid if they can not understand something presented to them. Yet, the way that something is presented may in fact, be the problem.

Learning to drive an automobile in a driver simulator machine is a rather non productive process for a large percentage of people. They need to get behind the wheel and press on the gas feel the energy of a car. Touching the controls that bring the car to a stop creates a meaningful experience for them. They are also the ones that need to feel the beat of music.

Why do so many people fear the computer while others grasp the idea quickly and take off with it? Well, to begin with, the computer industry began producing a product that was hard to reproduce by other manufacturers rather than making it user friendly. By the time they found out the misgivings of trying to keep industry secrets, a lot of potential users were scarred off. Yet, once convinced that the machines could be made more 'friendly' the consumers were somewhat willing to come back. If you look at how the cars and computers are made to be friendly you will see a variety of strategies being employed. Lots of visuals, a variety of hands on and verbal stuff going on at the same time. The computer industry has seen the benefits of presenting information in a variety of learning styles.

Some children already know their preferred learning style. They may have already been presented with learning activities in school that helped them to identify their learning strengths. You might consider talking with them about it.

As a parent what can you do? How can you find out what kind of preferred learning style your child has? The first thing you can do is be a keen observer. Observation is perhaps the most practical way to begin the process. It is also the most overlooked process. Learners will give clues to their preference. Provide a variety of options or situations that allow for choices to be made. According to research by, Howard Gardner and David Perkins at Harvard University, there are a variety of learning characteristics. Try to keep in mind some of the following basic characteristics of some preferred learning styles,

Linguistic Learners: they will relate well both to verbal and written information.

Visual Learners: will prefer a picture or a diagram to clarify or organize information to be learned or understood

Mathematical Learners: tend to use inductive an deductive reasoning; they tend to be good at abstract problem-solving

Tactile/Hands on/Kinesthetic:
these learners relate to movement and inner motion; they

prefer hands-on or even mechanical work

Musical Learners: they recognize and are sensitive to tone and beat

Spatial Learners: are able to visualize object and create internal pictures. Pilots are good spatial learners.

Interpersonal and Intrapersonal: those who relate well both inner self and those who are 'people smart'

Situational: these are people whose reactions to the situation are sometimes called "street smarts," and sometimes common sense. They sense situations around them.

There are also predesigned tests that can be administered by a professional evaluator. If you are curious and want to know more, ask your school if they can provide such a test for your child. So the next time you encounter that blank look as a response from your child, try another approach. Instead, begin with, "Here, let's sit down and I'll draw you a picture to describe what I mean." In doing so you will have recognized the child's preferred learning style and reduced the fear within them. You may get a different and a more desirable response. Can you visualize that?

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This review by John Lawry, who is a professor of psychology and coordinator of the First Semester Seminar at Marymount College, Tarrytown, New York, first appeared in About Campus, *a Marymount College periodical. Reprinting it is especially timely for us because within the last two months we too in the Free School community have begun discovering the alchemical miracles which are inherent in the use of a "talking stick" in council, inspired by a psychiatric colleague, Dr. Michael Murphy, who uses it extensively in his own group work, and has been kind enough to bring it to us as a teaching tool!*

HOW CIRCLES CAN CHANGE LEARNING

by John D. Lawry

I find that many college faculty are no longer satisfied with the old paradigm of lecture and note-taking or "stenography" as someone referred to it in this journal recently. The question is very often what do we put in its place. I think *The Way of Council,* by Jack Zimmerman and Virginia Coyle (paper, $16.95, Bramble Books, 1996) goes a long way in answering that question.

The Way of Council is the first book-length treatment of an ancient Native American practice of communication and community-building that veteran practitioners Zimmerman and Coyle have adapted to contemporary settings including schools, organizations and therapeutic communities. Participants sit in a circle, pass around a talking stick or object from one to another and are encouraged to speak and listen in a unique way.

The essence of the council process is what the authors call the "four intentions of council." The first is "speaking from the heart." This intention is probably the most challenging because it is the opposite of how we are used to speaking in academe, which is from the head. There are no words to describe it, but you know it when you hear it. The second intention is "listening from the heart." It is the kind of listening the Quakers call "devout" which I have found so empowering in ACOA meetings. As the authors say, "The success of council is largely determined by the quality of listening in the circle. (p. 30)" Indeed, such listening invites such speaking. The third intention is being of "lean expression." In other words, "Be brief and certainly don't pontificate." Finally, the fourth intention is "spontaneity." This seems redundant to me if one is truly speaking from the heart but the point is not to be rehearsing while someone is speaking and to trust that the wisdom will come forth. As one participant described it: "Sometimes I feel awkward and nervous, so it's amazing to feel the words come through me like this. I don't consider myself eloquent, but when the circle is really listening, I can speak in a way I never thought possible." (p. 30) This phenomenon the authors call "flowing."

I first learned of the practice and the book from a friend, Rachel Kessler, who uses it with great success with high school students. Though I have admired it from a distance, I never dreamed of using it with college students until reading the book last summer while revising my freshman seminar, a typical freshman transition course that attempts to teach first year students everything they need to know for success in college.

Rachel told me of an exercise that she uses on the second day of class that intrigued me. The homework assignment for the second class is to have students bring an object which symbolizes something that is important to them in their life right now. Concealed in a paper bag, these objects are then placed in the center of the circle of students. One by one the students circle the table of objects, with each student choosing an object that interested them, telling the group why they chose that particular object and then asking the owner to reveal its story. I decided to try it. I lit a candle and explained the council process with the talking stick. I asked for a blessing on the class and their first year of college. I can tell you that it was one of the most powerful classes I have ever taught in my 33 years of experience. This class has bonded in a way I have never seen before. Guest presenters have commented on the openness and unique personality of the class. This ritual created a "sacred space" that has transformed my classroom.

But Zimmerman and Coyle go much deeper. They write of the teacher's obligation to develop a heightened perception of the "Interactive Field," which is defined as "the dynamic interweaving of all the people in the circle together with an effable presence that seems to guide the circle toward meaningful interaction. (p. 99)" This is a phenomenon that every teacher is sooner or later aware of but not well equipped to handle or explore for lack of training or even language.

Zimmerman and Coyle talk about many other applications of the "way of council," including families, relationships and organizations. However, I believe that this book has so much wisdom about group process and how to best harness its potential for learning and transformation in the classroom that teachers of any discipline will find it useful.

Furthermore, I believe that this process has obvious application to the co-curricular setting as well. I can see it providing a powerful technique for conflict resolution in the residence hall. Zimmerman narrates a poignant story of a sixth grade summer camp incident of three girls smearing two boys' sleeping bags with toothpaste one night.

Zimmerman describes what happened:

> I sat with the two boys in their tent. One was brokenhearted and wept. He took it personally, even though we assured him that the girls had no way of knowing whose bags they were smearing with toothpaste. He was so upset, he couldn't go to sleep. The other boy didn't take it so hard. The girls' thoughtless actions, although not unusual, left me with a feeling of betrayal, since we had spoken of being at Ojai to build bridges between us all.
>
> Before the next morning's council started, the other facilitators and I decided to abandon our previous plans and deal with the toothpaste incident. I couldn't let go of my displeasure with the girls. The old aphorism that 'kids will be kids' wasn't helping me very much. I didn't ask who had done it or reprimand the group. I just told them I was upset and why. The council took off almost immediately. The three girls identified themselves and described how bad they felt. 'We didn't think,' they said. 'It was just something to *do*.' Indeed, they hadn't known whose bags they were smearing. The less affected boy spoke eloquently about how it felt to crawl into his bag and feel the mess. The other boy didn't say much, because he didn't want to cry in front of the group.
>
> That circle brought the whole group together in a way no prepared theme could have accomplished. An ordinary incident became a strong teaching in the context of council. Some of the kids recognized the episode as a metaphor for more serious thoughtless actions and behaviors. (pp. 146-7)

I am certain that student life administrators can think of many other examples of how having students listening and speaking "from the heart" could have saved a lot of grief over "thoughtless actions and behaviors."

Without realizing it, all of my classes have been evolving toward what Zimmerman and Coyle call "the way of council." I almost never lecture and my students always sit in a circle. Everyone takes a turn in leading the discussion on an assigned reading or we write in class and share what we have written. What this book has taught me is to see more explicitly the future direction of this pedagogical evolution that I and so many of my colleagues are presently involved in.

SURVEY AND ACTION PLAN FOR FAMILIES:

ΣΚΟΛΕ *is fortunate to have a networking relationship with a very fine organization from the west coast called "Touch The Future," a non-profit group which puts out a quarterly newsletter entitled* TouchTheFuture, Creating New Models For A New Generation Of Children, *edited by Michael Mendizza, with a masthead composed of a "Board of Directors, Advisors and Participants & A Few Friends," among whom are many, many distinguished and knowledgeable people both professional and knowledgeable in the realm of family and child advocacy and care. We have published a number of articles by some of TTF's "Participants and Friends" in past issues. Here is a truly significant proposal for a whole new paradigm of family/child support and advocacy. Please read it with love and care! See the end of the article for how to contact TTF for a subscription or one of their other offerings, including their e-mail address and website!*

TRANSFORMING THE AMERICAN FAMILY: A CALL FOR RADICAL SOCIAL POLITICAL ACTION

James W. Prescott, Ph.D.

The January 1998 edition of *Scientific American* draws attention to a number of recent studies reported at the October 1997 annual meetings of the Society of Neurosciences in New Orleans ("Don't Stress," by Kristin Leutyler). These studies support earlier findings that significant failure or impairment of affectional bonding in the mother-infant/child relationship results in both structural and functional damage to the brain.

The article describes how Dr. Michael Meaney of the Douglas Hospital Research Centre in Montreal; Dr. Mark Smith of the Du Pont Merck Research Labs, NIMH scientists, Dr. Mary Carlson of Harvard Medical School and other investigators have continued a long tradition of research on the effects of mother deprivation on infant brain-behavioral development. This research is the latest in over thirty years of neuropsychological studies on the mother-infant relationship which have also involved infra-human primates.

Mary Carlson of Harvard Medical School observed behavioral problems in socially isolated chimpanzees and suspected that the autisticlike symptoms stemmed from a lack of tactile stimulation.... Compared with family-reared children, Romanian orphans showed retarded physical and mental growth and cortisols.

Robert M. Sapolsky of Stanford University reports: not only do chronically high GC (cortisol) levels kill off hippocampal neurons, they leave many others vulnerable to damage from epilepsy, hypoglycemia, cardiac arrest and proteins implacated in Alzheimer's disease and AIDS-related dementia.... The worst thing for an animal is to remain isolated.

These and other brain disorders underlie the well documented depression, impulse dyscontrol, pathological violence and enhanced propensity for alcohol/drug abuse which follows from these separation-induced brain disorders. Earlier studies have clearly established that failed bonding in the mother-infant/child relationship (the"isolation effect" or Somato-Sensory Affectional Deprivation S-SAD) is the single most important predictor of violence against offspring (child abuse) and later adolescent/adult societal violence.

Mounting evidence strongly indicates that traditional "institutionalized day care" which involves "stranger care" not only separates infants and very young children from their mothers and their nurturant love and affection, but also places them at "high risk" for abnormal brain behavioral development. "Day Care" also impairs or prevents breast-feeding which is essential for normal immunological health and brain development of the child. Breast-feeding is intimately linked to the child-care reform agenda.

It is for good reason that international research has led the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF to recommend breast-feeding for "two years or beyond" (Innocenti Declaration, 1990) and for at least one full year by the American Academy of Pediatrics in their revised policy statement "Breast-feeding and the Use of Human Milk (Pediatrics, December 1997)."

Yet, many newborns and infants are deprived of this best "Head Start" because our social-economic based child-care system discourages—if not prevents—women from being "nurturing mothers" and from breast-feeding their infants/children for the time periods recommended by the WHO, UNICEF and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Of special interest is the loss of the amino acid tryptophan—necessary for brain serotonin development—and other essential brain nutrients found only in breastmilk and absent in formula milk which pose special risks for abnormal brain development in formula-fed infants. Deficits in brain serotonin have been well established in depressive, impulse dyscontrol and violent behaviors. The report that some 600,000 children and youth have been prescribed serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SRIs) to control depression is indicative of the magnitude of this problem. Prozac prescriptions alone have increased 46 percent from last year for those 13-18 years of age. It is highly unlikely that any of these children and youth have been breast-fed for "two years or beyond"—as recommended by WHO-UNICEF. Prevention is easy if we only had the wisdom and courage to act on the common sense and hard science before us.

The magnitude and tragedy of the American family and its children have yet to be effectively addressed by the U.S. Congress and the Clinton Administration where little or no programs of true PREVENTION have been established comprehensive programs which must begin during pregnancy and carried through the formative periods of brain-behavioral development.

Tragically, general and specific forms of nutritional deficiencies affect millions of American children which can be prevented. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director, United Nations Children Fund, summarized some of the principle findings of UNICEF's 1977 "State of the World's Children" at a Paris press conference:

> *Children who survive the early consequences of nutritional deficiencies are often left crippled, chronically vulnerable to disease and intellectually impaired, unahle to concentrate and learn," "These are not problems children grow out of. They are permanent... "*
>
> *UNICEF estimates that more than 13 million children in the United States— or one in four under age 12 don 't get enough to eat (where) one-sixth of U.S. children are born into poverty, a higher proportion than in any other industrialized nation.... Discrimination and violence against women is a major cause of malnutrition. When women suffer, the nutritional well-being of their children suffers too. (Chicago Tribune, December 17, 1997).*

The magnitude and tragedy of the American family and its children have yet to be effectively addressed by the U. S. Congress and the Clinton Administration where little or no programs of true

PREVENTION have been established comprehensive programs which must begin during pregnancy and carried through the formative periods of brain behavioral development. In an article, "Running Into Trouble: As More Teen-Agers Flee Abuse, Shelters Lack Beds," Jane Gross (New York Times: 18 DEC 98), reports:

"I'll go any place but home," said the blond, lanky teenager, who arrived at a runaway shelter here bruised but smiling, relieved to be at a secret location where her family could not find her."

"If I have to keep running, I'll keep running. I've had enough"....

But run where, when there are 30,000 teenagers who have fled their homes in New York State and only 400 emergency shelter beds, 13,000 runaways in New Jersey with safe haven for only 300, and 10,000 in Connecticut with room for just 115? Even if a runaway finds a bed in a crisis center, where does he or she go after reaching the 30-day federal limit for sanctuary in an emergency shelter, like the one in Harrison?...

Here in Westchester County (one of the wealthiest Counties in the U.S.), 1,883 teenagers were reported missing in 1996, up from 1,534 in 1995 (23% increase). In the same time, county spending for the one emergency shelter decreased by nearly 40 percent, forcing the agency to make up more of its $330,000 budget from private contributions.

Andrew Jacobs, in his article: "Neediest Cases: Navigating the Turbulent Waters of an Adolescence in New York City (New York Times: 21 DEC 97)," reports: *Jobs and recreation programs for teenagers are scarce; the potential for trouble is abundant. Although there are more than 760,000 New York City children living in poverty, city financing of youth programs was cut 42 percent from 1993 to 1996...*

Said David R. Jones, the president of Community Service Society of New York. "Everyone is crowing about the falling crime rate, but if we keep ignoring our youth, we're going to pay for this later on."...

For the 47,000 children in foster care, the challenges are daunting. Each year 2,000 to 2,500 of them receive a $750 parting gift from the city and are expected to make it on their own." Almost the entire group ends up on public assistance or in the criminal justice system," Jones said.

With no skill, no family and no network of people to rely on, it's not a surprise that they do.

On June 19, 1997, the Child Welfare League (CWL) in conjunction with the Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services and FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, held a press conference reporting an additional firm link between child abuse and neglect and the arrests of children. Arrest rate of 9-12 year olds referred to child welfare in Sacramento County was 67 times greater than the arrest rate among similar aged children not known to the child welfare system. 42-50% of youth crime in Sacramento County can be attributed to a history of child abuse and neglect reported to the welfare system.

It was estimated that it costs the taxpayer $471,000 to deal with a "typical " youth offender, ages 9-12; and $40,000 for five years of intensive intervention with one "at-risk" family.

It was estimated that it costs the taxpayer $471,000 to deal with a "typical" youth offender, ages 9-12, and $40,000 for five years of intensive intervention with one "at-risk" family. The projected savings of $40,000 to the taxpayer is an underestimate of the true cost savings involved since costs to the taxpayer after age 12 years for the continuing offender have not been calculated. Intervention at ages 9-12 years is much too late, as the primary damage has already been inflicted during infancy and childhood.

Being poor increased the variety of physical and mental ills: "Sustained economic hardship leaves physical, psychological and cognitive imprints that decrease the quality of day-to-day life," stated Dr. John Lynch (New England Journal of Medicine, 25 Dec, 1997).

Dr. Timothy D. Dye and associates from the Women's and Children's Health Care Research Center, Dept. of Obstetrics and Gynecology, SUNY, Syracuse, reported: Women with mistimed pregnancies and pregnancies that were not wanted were significantly less likely to breast-feed than were women whose pregnancies were planned (AM. J. Public Health, 1997 (87)).

It is well known that breast-feeding provides essential antibodies to the infant/child and stimulates the development of their immune system which protects them against many infections and illnesses.

Thus, breast-feeding becomes even more crucial when infants/children are placed in institutional daycare settings which expose them to numerous infectious agents carried by other children. It is equally well recognized that infectious children in institutional day care spread their infections to other healthy children who then carry their infections back home to infect parents and their siblings. The total health costs associated with day-care precipitated illnesses in children and adults have yet to be assessed but they can be projected to be staggering.

In the January 1988 edition of PEDIATRICS, Dr. Horwood and Fergusson from the Christchurch School of Medicine, Christchurch, New Zealand noted:

Breastfeeding is associated with small but detectable increases in child cognitive ability and educational achievement. These effects are l) pervasive, being reflected in a range of measures including standardized tests, teacher ratings, and academic outcomes in high school; and 2) relatively long-lived, extending throughout childhood into young adulthood.

In a lengthy "in-depth review" of the status of how well the welfare reform act is working, Jason Deparle in his article: "Tougher Welfare Limits Bring Surprising Results (New York Times, December 30, 1997)," offers:

Early evidence suggests that only about half of those leaving the rolls have jobs. That percentage seems little or no better than in the past, in weaker economies and with less stringent rules. With more people than ever leaving welfare, the raw number of workers is rising. But so is the number of families with neither benefits nor jobs...

Surveys suggest that many of those leaving welfare for work remain in poverty. . . Many have seen substantial declines in incomes that were already dangerously low. ..

Despite the threat to crack down on deadbeat dads, almost all the burden has remained on the mothers... Even in flush times, states began channeling some of their new federal resources away from the poor and toward causes like tax relief...

The following are intended to realign national health policies to be consistent with the mounting research on cognative as well as the emotional/social/sexual development:

Establish "Parent/Child Development Centers that would provide training and education to welfare parents in infant and child development which would replace institutionalized day care, as we know it. Welfare Funds would be replaced by Scholarship Funds and lead to a certificate of Infant/Child Development Practitioner where such parents would assist in the expansion of the Parent/Child Development Centers in their communities.

National health policy:

1. Create programs to support mothers being nurturing mothers which includes affectional bonding and breastfeeding for "two years of age and beyond," as recommended by the WHO and UNICEF.
2. Create breastmilk banks in day care facilities where nursing mothers who are compelled into the workforce can store and make available their breastmilk to their infants and children, in lieu of formula milk that is harmful to the developing brain and immune system.
3. As pharmacological immunizations of infants and children are required, so should every effort be made to provide "natural immunization" of this nation's infants and children through breastfeeding, particularly where infants and children are exposed to the "high risk environments" of institutionalized day-care. No greater "Head Start" could be given to the newborns/infants and children of this nation, as these nurturing measures would optimize their immunological health and brain development which carries lifelong benefits for them and our society.

The following recommendations are intended to realign national health policies to be consistent with the mounting research on cognitive as well as the emotional/social/sexual development.

Initiate legislation:

1. Amend the "Welfare Reform Act of 1996" to:

a) exempt nursing mothers and their children from the restrictions of the "Welfare Reform Act of 1996";

b) exempt mothers and families with children three years of age or younger from the restrictions of the "Welfare Reform Act of 1996,"

c) provide monetary incentives to support mothers breastfeeding their children at home which would match those planned monetary incentives for entities and corporations providing "day- care" for these infants/children;

d) establish "Parent/Child Development Centers" that would provide training and education to welfare parents in infant and child development which would replace "institutionalized day care", as we know it. "Welfare Funds" would be replaced by "Scholarship Funds" and lead to a certificate of "Infant/Child Development Practitioner" where such parents would assist in the expansion of the "Parent/Child Development Centers" in their communities. Mothers with their infants/children would attend the "Parent/Child Development Centers," thus, eliminating the need for institutionalized day care with "stranger care" which has known adverse consequences upon the physical, emotional social health and cognitive development of such infants/children;

e) eliminate public funding subsidization of the infant formula companies and use these public funds to support mothers breastfeeding their infant/child. Exceptions for "medical necessity" for formula-feeding would, of course, apply;

f) prohibit the States from using Federal Welfare monies for any purpose other than the support of infants, children, youth and families in need;

g) mandate a "set-aside" of 15% of Federal Welfare monies made available to each State to create a State fund to support evaluation and follow-up analyses of the health status and social well being of children and families that have been displaced from the welfare rolls and for those who continue to be supported through the Welfare Reform Act of 1996;

2. Initiate appropriate legislation for non-welfare parents/families that would:

a) provide monetary support to enable mothers to nurture and breast-feed their children at home that would match monetary incentives to day care operators and corporations who provide "day-care" for these infants/ children;

b) provide for an "environmental impact statement" which establishes a cost/benefit analysis that justifies the total costs incurred in compelling a mother of infants and young children into the workforce compared to costs incurred in supporting that mother in being a nurturing mother at home.

c) provide for an "environrnental impact statement" which establishes criteria for evaluating "benefits" and/or "injury" to infants and children placed in institutional day-care and other placed "at-risk children."

d) provide for the protection of mothers breastfeeding in public where any harassment of the nursing mother would be met with penalties comparable to those associated with sexual harassment.

e) eliminate time-limitations on aid to families with a history of domestic violence, addiction, and/or mental health problems, e.g. depression.

3. Initiate appropriate legislation that would mandate the use of any "budget-surplus" monies only for the health benefits ofthe children and families of this nation.

Establish an "Economic Human Development Council" that would:

1. Quantify the human costs to families and children associated with the increasing disparity of wealth in our society and provide economic legislative alternatives for a more equitable distribution of this nation's capital wealth among investors, corporate producers and workers where comparable and proportionate economic gains and benefits would be experienced by all in the economic growth of this nation.

2. Establish a study to identify those historical factors that led to the change of social-economic conditions where the income of a single adult is now no longer capable of supporting a family of four.

Elisha, Free School graduate, still cares for the newborn babies she helped into the world as a student midwife apprentice. Picture taken by Connie Frisbee-Houde

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Without an affectionate and nurturing family, it will not be possible to reverse or eliminate the escalating domestic and social violence that is destroying the very fabric of our democratic society.

Given the above, it seems timely to organize a series of national one-day conferences to publicize the history and importance of on-going developmental brain-behavioral research on the significance of the mother-infant/ child relationship and its societal implications; and the social-economic reforms necessary that would give equal value to the American Family with the American Corporation.

The human development conferences would focus on the damage from mother-infant/child deprivation to the emotional-social brain and associated behaviors in contrast to the cognitive brain and mental behaviors which have been the traditional focus of previous conferences of this kind. Such a conferencewould provide a scientific foundation for mother/infant-centered child care with an emphases on nurturing-care rather than custodial-care and relationships.

A parallel program of national conferences and "Town Forums" would also be held on the social-economic reforms necessary to restore economic balance to this nation and which would permit the income of a single adult to support a family of four. If America can put a man on the moon, it can surely construct an economic system where the income of a single adult can support a family of four with all the benefits that this would have for helping to transform the American Family from one of confiict and violence to one of harmony and happiness.

Hopefully, this review and suggestions for a national health policy and economic reforms to restore integrity and stability to the American Family and its children will provide a basis to move this nation toward excellence in the next "Millennium".

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TTF, 4350 Lime Ave., Long Beach, CA 90807, (T) 562-426-2627, (F) 427-8189, e-mail TTFuture@aol.com. They are hoping for funds to establish a web page, and would appreciate your contributions.

Alan Bonsteel, M.D., and Carlos Bonilla, M.D., are the authors of A Choice for Our Children (reviewed below), *published by the Institute for Contemporary Studies. They are both contributors to ΣΚΟΛΕ. Carlos has sent us many offerings, both his alone and in joint authorship with many students and colleagues on behalf of all children. We are grateful for their willingness to share their hearts and their works with us!*

HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE UNDERSTATED TENFOLD

by Alan Bonsteel and Carlos Bonilla

The California Department of Education recently claimed that this year's high school dropout rate of 3.9 percent was a big improvement over previous years.

Only those readers with sharp eyes and time on their hands noticed in the fine print that the 3.9 percent was the yearly "event" dropout rate, not the overall high school dropout rate. Thus, to get anything approaching the real thing, one had to multiply by four.

The real hawkeyes might also have noticed that the truly fine print noted that dropouts from continuation schools were not included. Thus, after multiplying 3.9 per cent by four, one had to add a generous fudge factor for the continuation students, almost all of whom ultimately drop out.

However, that still fell far short of the mark. The "yearly" dropout rate in fact included only enrollment in September through the school year end in June. Thus, as a scathing Little Hoover Commission in 1991 pointed out, students who drop out over the summer and don't re-enroll in the fall never show up in the CDE's Alice-in-Wonderland statistics.

Although the Little Hoover Commission strongly recommended plugging this obvious hole in the statistics, the change has never been implemented.

A far better gauge of dropouts would be California's graduation rate, which stood at 65.7 % for the 1994-95 yearly "event rate" cited in the CDE's press release. The graduation rate does include summer dropouts by following a cohort of students who start the 10th grade and then counting how many are left at graduation.

Also, unlike the "event rate," the evaluation rate has been stagnant for the last decade. Subtracting 65.7 percent from 100 percent gives us a dropout rate of 34.3 percent, a little closer to reality.

Even that, though, understates the true rate, because it counts only 10th through 12th grade. The 1991 Little Hoover Commission report estimated that adding dropouts at the ninth grade and below would add another 4 percent to the total bringing us to around 38 percent, consistent with a federal Department of Education dropout rate for California in excess of 30 percent.

With numbers like these, is it any wonder that California's prison population exploded more than sixfold between1971 and 1995?

Perhaps this kind of disinformation disseminated at taxpayer expense should come as no surprise. Superintendent Delaine Eastin faces an extremely difficult re-election campaign next year, given the deepening crisis in California's public schools, and California's worst-kept political secret is the renewed effort for school choice planned for 1998.

And yet, it is a particularly bitter betrayal that the tragedy of the kids failed by our public schools would be exploited for political gain.

In an information age, those who fail even to make it through high school are destined for poverty if not worse, and most of those 4 percent of kids dropping out before they even reach the 10th grade are destined to swell the numbers in our already-bulging prisons.

To play a shell game with these crucial dropout numbers is a grave disservice to California's taxpayers, voters, parents—and, most of all—to our children.

REVIEWS:

And here is a review of the book by Carlos and Alan mentioned above, The reviewer, Dave Harrison, teaches at the Free School:

A CHOICE FOR OUR CHILDREN:
Curing The Crisis in America's Schools
By Alan Bonsteel and Carlos A. Bonilla,
with an Exchange of Views Between
John E. Coons and Milton Friedman
ICS Press, San Francisco, CA 1997
$19.95 (Trade Paper)

Reviewed by David Harrison

Whenever I am faced with confronting the issue of school choice as it is framed in our country, I always brace myself for the same hollow rhetoric, be it the thinly veiled self-interest of the conservatives' call for freedom for freedom's sake, or the too often disingenuous concern of the so-called liberals. What always seems to get lost in this rhetoric is a real life concern for real people—the parents who bravely battle a powerful and insensitive bureaucracy in order to protect their children; the students who try to learn and survive with their selves intact in a system that is at least indifferent to them, if not insidiously working against them.

I have to admit that I prepared myself for a similar reaction to this book. I was ready to challenge or agree with the same old stale arguments from the popular mainstream. But I quickly detected something different about this volume of articles. Interspersed between the economic arguments and incentives-based statistical models, I found a deep and genuine concern for the lives of parents, children, and families.

This concern is articulated beautifully in the book's accounts of various alternative approaches to schooling. Focusing mainly on California success stories, the authors detail schools like the Marcus Garvey School in South Central Los Angeles, whose third-grade students regularly outperform sixth-graders from more affluent neighborhoods of the city. The school provides "a safe haven where the children's humanity is affirmed and academic excellence is the norm." In addition to these heart warming success stories, the authors also provide brief overviews of broader movements in alternative education, with chapters focusing on Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner.

There is also the story of Anthony Alvarado, a brave superintendent of an East Harlem district in the New York City public school system. Faced with such hideous and unfathomable realities as a 7% graduation rate at Benjamin Franklin High School and the city's lowest reading scores, he sought innovative solutions—increased freedom over curriculum for teachers and students alike and the dissolution of unsuccessful and poorly attended programs. Despite the more than moderate success of Mr. Alvarado's creative approach, his tactics were reviled and discredited by New York City's "huge, cumbersome, and unresponsive [educational] monopoly."

This depressing reality—that the educational system is indifferent to the innovative creativity of its most brilliant and caring minds—is also discussed at great length. As witnessed by the various quotes of NEA members provided in the book, it quickly becomes apparent that neither teaching children nor reforming and improving our public schools is very high on the list of priorities expounded by the influential brethren of educational leaders.

The goal more clearly stated is retaining control of a lucrative system in which the more you fail, the more money you can appeal for, and it helps if you have black or Latino faces to prostitute in your efforts to line the pimping pockets of centralized administrations. Imbedded in this desperate clutch at power, influence, and affluence is a distrust and outright contempt for the alleged beneficiaries of the system namely, families and children.

To prove this point, Mr. Bonilla starts right at the top of the monopoly's hierarchy, quoting Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers on the topic of educational choice. Mr. Shanker states, "Parents and students won't make the right choices... people don't choose on the basis of educational excellence. They'll choose a school because it has a good ball team or because their girlfriend goes there." Not only is this kind of condescension morally unpalatable, it is also narrowly simple-minded, showing a lack of imagination regarding the various lifestyles that bring people happiness.

Given this kind of evidence for the failures of our self-serving centralized public school monopoly, it is easy to see why the authors of *A Choice for Our Children* make a prescription similar to the mission statement of its publishers: "to promote self-governing and entrepreneurial ways of life." This is an approach to educational philosophy shared by more radical authors as well, echoing, for instance, the sentiments of John Taylor Gatto when he asserts that we should shun decision-making handed down from a "centrally and scientifically managed bureaucracy with comprehensive control," opting instead for "localized miniature communities free to develop as its people see fit."

In order for this prescription to be successful, it is imperative that these principals of freedom and self-reliance be backed by a moral fortitude built upon commitment, self sacrifice, and genuine emotion among the parties involved. After reading this book, I found myself realizing that this was the first time all of these components were in place in a comprehensive discussion of school choice.

A Choice for Our Children *can be ordered from the publisher by calling 1-800-326 0263 or via the Internet at a 10% discount at www. icspress. com. An editorial warning needs to be added here, however. If you find that the internet address requires a password, as I did when I attempted to correspond with Carlos and Alan via their website, you may have to use the 800 number, at least for now. Like our website, theirs still seems to be "under construction."*

AERO-GRAMME

The Alternative Education Resource Organization Newsletter

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Joshua Hornick is co-founder and director of Pathfinder Learning Center in Amherst, MA. Pathfinder is the first professionally staffed community center in the United States specifically supporting unschooled teenagers and their families.

THE TEENAGE LIBERATION HANDBOOK: HOW TO QUIT SCHOOL AND GET A REAL LIFE AND EDUCATION.

by Grace Llewellyn
1991, $14.95
Published by Lowery House Publishers
Eugene, OR 97440

Review by Joshua Hornick

When new people join the Board of Governors of the teen center where I work, we have them swear in on Grace Llewellyn's *The Teenage Liberation Handbook.* All the teenagers with whom I work swear by it; why shouldn't the Board? It is the one book that I wish every teenager and parent of a teenager would read. It is packed with information and inspiration. Llewellyn, a former English teacher, cuts to the chase in the book's introduction.

> Did your guidance counselor ever tell you to consider quitting school? That you have other choices, quite beyond lifelong hamburger flipping or inner-city crack dealing? That legally you can find a way out of school, that once you're out you'll learn and grow better, faster, and more naturally than you ever did in school, that there are zillions of alternatives, that you can quit school and still go to A Good College and even have a Real Life in the Suburbs if you so desire? Just in case your counselor never told you these things, I'm going to. That's what this book is for.

Llewellyn explains why you should leave school and what steps you need to take to get out. She gives a myriad suggestions for how to direct your life and your education once you have the freedom that comes with freedom from school. I have personally seen scores of teenagers' lives turnaround or shift into high gear from heeding the inspirational message of this book.

But don't think that this is just a book for those interested in leaving school. The philosophy of personal power and responsibility which Llewellyn sets forth inspires the school-bound teenager and the school-free adult as well. Teenagers that wouldn't think of leaving scho0 ol usually see school as a requirement, an unassailable fact of life, almost as though it were biologically determined. When they are dissatisfied with some aspect of it, they usually feel powerless. *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* shows a teenager (and her family) that high school is a conscious choice, one they could choose not to exercise. Understanding that high school is a choice brings much more power and maturity into a teenager's high school experience.

The Teenage Liberation Handbook contains five sections:

- **Making the decision.** Here, Llewellyn extols the power and magic of adolescence and the importance of freedom. Youth is a time for exploration—both inward and outward—and adventure, a time to feel your burgeoning beauty. Schools are much more involved with control than with discovering the beauty of life. They encourage passivity. They tell you what you have to do, cramming your mind and schedule with their agenda. They don't even let you out to play on the most beautiful day of May.

- **The first steps.** Here, Llewellyn leads you through the first steps involved in leaving school and starting a self-directed program. The chapter titles speak for themselves:

  The Perhaps Delicate Parental Issue
  The Not Necessarily Legal Issue
  The Importance of Vacation, Money
  Bicycles and other Technical Difficulties
  Getting a Social Life Without Proms
  Adults in a New Light (friends, teachers, role models, guides, mentors)
  Starting Out: A Sense of the Possibilities

- **The Tailor-Made Educational Extravaganza.** This section always makes me wish that there were 30 hours in a day. Over 150 pages, Llewellyn tells you about all the wonderful things that a person can study or experience. Along with a chapter on each of the major "subject areas," Llewellyn discusses the use of the community, nature, and the world as resources for learning. She suggests books and other resources. For the adult generalist like myself, it is a wonderful reminder of Ivan Illich's sage wisdom: the tools for learning are abundant and cheap. For the teenager, it is a huge array of launching pads into exciting study and discovery.

- **Touching the World: Finding Good Work.** Here, Llewellyn surprises us with the breadth of meaningful work opportunities available to teenagers. These included apprenticeships, internships, volunteering, starting your own business, farm work and social and political activism.

- **The Lives of Unschoolers.** Here, Llewellyn presents you with a few case studies of teenagers who have left school. In one short chapter, Llewellyn delights in listing famous teenage unschoolers, including Ansel Adams, Irving Berlin, Pearl Buck, Henry Ford, George Gershwin, Whoopi Goldberg, Samuel Gompers, Cyndi Lauper, Frank Lloyd Wright, the Wright Brothers. She also quotes several "geniuses" who believe they became successful despite schooling instead of because of it. Winston Churchill, for example, said:

> I was happy as a child with my toys in my nursery. I have been happier every year since I became a man. But this interlude of school makes a somber grey patch upon the chart of my journey. It was an unending spell of worries that did not then seem petty, and of toil uncheered by fruition; a time of discomfort, restriction and purposeless monotony.

The Teenage Liberation Handbook is well supplemented by Llewellyn's next two books, *Real Lives: Eleven Teenagers Who Don't Go to School* and *Freedom Challenge: African American Homeschoolers* and her book catalog *Genius Tribe.* All Llewellyn's books can be ordered from Lowery House Publishers, Box 1014, Eugene, OR 97440, Fax 541-343-3158.

A SEARCH FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS FROM APOCRYPHAL, BUDDHIST, ISLAMIC AND SANSKRIT SOURCES

by Professor Fida Hassnain

Gateway Books, Bath BA2 8QJ
England, 1994. £8.95; $16.50
from Down-to-Earth Books
1-518-432-1578

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

This truly extraordinary—some would claim utterly unbelievable—piece of scholarship contains no messages from the Archangel Gabriel, no interviews with extra-terrestrials, and no Elvis, Princess Di (or Jesus) sightings. What it does contain are decades of verifiable research performed by a distinguished seventy-three-year-old Indian Professor of History who has drawn the—some would also claim utterly fantastic—conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth did not die on the cross as hundreds of millions of Christians like myself are taught to believe. Instead, he spent the second half of his life studying and teaching in the East before he died in the Himalayan province now known as Kashmir.

Obviously, if the theory that Christ lived to a ripe old age were somehow proven, it would stand the entire Christian world on its head overnight, thanks to a millennium of emotional, spiritual, political and economic investment in his supposed martyrdom at the hands of the Roman conquerors of the Holy Land. But Professor Hassnain is not out to discredit modern Christianity, with which he says he has no axe to grind. Though a traditional Northern Indian Muslim by birth, over time he crossed over into Sufism, a mystical branch of Islam, and therefore now believes that all religions should be honored equally as expressions of a divine oneness. Hassnain is careful to point out that Judaism, Christianity and Islam can all be traced to the same historical root: Abraham. He says that his motivation for spending so many years of his life researching the earthly existence of the flesh and blood Jesus owes itself to his reverence for one of humanity's great prophets and to his deeply-held desire to free up Christianity's monopoly on Him whom they call the Son of God. His hope in so doing is that at least some of the chasm of misunderstanding between the world's great religions might thereby be bridged.

No, Fida Hassnain is no crackpot, which I'm sure he will be labeled by Christian "authorities" everywhere should they ever happen to get their hands on this admittedly incredible book. Rather he is a scholar of the highest order who himself is a direct descendent of a grandson of Mohammed on his mother's side. And he has left few stones unturned in his voluminous research, which as Director of Archives for the Jammu and Kashmir states in the 1960s, he was then in a rare position to begin.

Nor is he the first to write a book alleging that Jesus physically survived the crucifixion. The previously published *Jesus Lived in India*, by Holger Kersten, made the same claim. Kersten, it should be noted, relied heavily on Professor Hassnain's discoveries about Jesus' "second life" in the East.

[It should also be noted that *ΣΚΟΛΕ* editor Mary Leue traveled to India to meet Fida Hassnain and also brought back his first book on the subject of Jesus' life after the crucifixion, *The Third Gospel*, with her, determined to see it published in the Western world. While in Kashmir, she also visited what Hassnain claims to be Jesus' tomb—the Rozabal, as it is called in Srinagar, dedicated to "Yuz (sometimes Yuzu) Asaph," and as such, greatly venerated by all Kashmiri. She felt a profoundly sacred presence there, and has become convinced that Yuzu Asaph, was in fact Jesus, this being a title Jesus had taken on while he was in Nisibis in Parthia in order to conceal his identity from exiled Jews there who wished him evil, as recounted by the Persian Mir Khwand, speaking of "*Hazrat* (the Master) Issa" and his travels in the East. Mary was at least partly instrumental in helping this book to reach publication.]

When one begins digging into the wealth of historical material presented here, Professor Hassnain's proposition is not nearly as far-out as it first might suggest. For instance, writes Hassnain, it has been forgotten how wide the Jewish diaspora was in ancient times, extending into Asia to such an extent that several Hebrew prophets, including Samuel and Ezekiel, are reported to have been buried along the great Silk Road to the East, that ancient highway which stretched all the way from Rome to Cathay, and disciples Thomas and Simon Peter are believed to have traveled to India after the crucifixion. Thomas is known to have founded a Christian sect in south India which survived for many centuries, the traces of which can still be found. There is substantial anecdotal evidence, too, that Moses, like Jesus, spent his last days in Kashmir as well, and the tomb which is locally believed to contain the remains of the greatest Hebrew leader of all is still, to this day, tended by Semitic-looking people. He also discovered among various Kashmiri groups a number of current religious practices, including the koshering of food, the east-west orientation of graves and the blowing of the *shofar* which can clearly be traced back to the tribes of Israel. By Hassnain's linguistic analysis, ten percent of the Kashmiri language contains Hebrew derivatives.

Thus, concludes Professor Hassnain, it is entirely plausible that Jesus would have made a return journey eastward after the violent reaction to his public life in the Holy Land. That there was a first visit, during the so-called "lost years" when Jesus is reported to have "traveled to the East," is beyond question, according to numerous sources cited by the author.

Sections of the book read like a good detective novel. Hassnain was put onto Jesus' trail in the East by the chance discovery in Ladakh of the diaries of a German Moravian missionary who mentioned the travels in Tibet and Ladakh of a 19th-century Russian journalist by the name of Nicolas Notovitch. The diaries led Hassnain to Notovitch's book, *The Unknown Life of Christ*, in which the author writes that while he was recovering from a bad fall at the Tibetan Buddhist monastery known as Hemis in Ladakh, the head Lama read to him ancient historical documents about Jesus' life in India. The sacred scrolls, safely hidden away on the rooftop of the earth for nearly two thousand years, contain reports and commentary on the teachings and travels of "the Issa Buddha," who "preached the holy doctrine in India and then to the children of Israel." Hassnain, like Notovitch, is convinced that Issa and Jesus (whose name in Aramaic is Jesu, Yuzu in Urdu, one of the languages of northern India, and Issa, in Persian), are one and the same and that these scrolls refer to the years both before and after the public life of Jesus.

Flush with his sensational findings, Notovitch hand-delivered his manuscript to a cardinal at the Vatican, who pleaded with him not to publish it and offered him "money for his expenses" if he would turn the manuscript over to him. Notovitch refused the bribe and saw the project through to publication, but was widely accused of forgery and fraud by the society of his day. Meanwhile, when Professor Hassnain traveled to Hemis fifty years later to see the scrolls for himself, he was told the scrolls pertaining to Issa had "disappeared."

A Search for the Historical Jesus, like other works disputing the death on the cross theory, then takes us through a microanalysis of what little written record remains of the crucifixion, as well as of possible physical evidence like the Shroud of Turin, in which Jesus' body is believed to have been wrapped after it was removed from the cross. Hassnain's argument that Jesus survived his ordeal is quite convincing; more so, I have found, than the account offered by the New Testament, as is his argument that Christ then slowly traveled back to the East, where he would die of natural causes many decades later. Along the way Hassnain cites numerous sources in addition to the Tibetan scrolls which he never got to see—including the Bible, the Gnostic Gospels and the Dead Sea scrolls, as well as substantial archaeological evidence, to make his case.

Whodunit? Read it and see for yourself. But if Fida Hassnain is right, he has certainly done his part to set the record straight.

A Search for the Historical Jesus from Apocryphal, Buddist, Islamic & Sanskrit Sources, Gateway Books, Bath BA2 8QJ UK '94. by Professor Fida Hassnain

Millions of people have been brought up with the idea that Jesus' life mission ended with crucifixion, to redeem our sins. This is becoming an untenable proposition. Professor Hassnain, a leading cross-cultural researcher of the life of Jesus, presents another story.

Jesus came to teach the known world, not just the Roman Empire. Professor Hassnain has uncovered manuscripts and evidence that:

- the secretive Essene Order raised and protected Jesus;
- Jesus' missing youth was spent in Persia and India;
- many obscured Gospels reveal the fact that Jesus' work was backed by Essene operations involving far more than twelve male apostles;
- Jesus survived the Cross, by an undercover plan which fooled many;
- Jesus ministered to Jews in Persia, Afghanistan, India and Central Asia, with Thomas and Simon Peter;
- Moses, Jesus and mother Mary were buried in Kashmir amongst people of Jewish faith and origin;
- the Church in the West, over centuries, has gone to great lengths to remove evidence of this, to strengthen its position as the representative of Christ on earth.

Citing many historical documents, Professor Hassnain, as director of Museums and Anti-quities in Kashmir, himself a Sufi, respectfully questions what we have been taught. Discovering records of Jesus in Ladakh, he used his position to research what is presented in this book.

Available from Down-to_Earth Books, 72 Philip St., Albany, NY 12202;
Tel. 518-432-1578; Fax 462-6836; e-mail MarySKOLE@aol.com;
$13.95 plus s&h $6.00. Sorry, no credit cards.

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TO BE SEEN BY THE LISTENER

by Ben Kastelic

Ben Kastelic's father Robert (page 59) bids fair to be outstripped by his son Ben, whose meditation follows. Ben's first contribution appeared in the Fall 96 issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ. He says of himself, "Ben is in 10th grade at The Foothills Academy, in Cave Creek, Arizona. The Academy is a charter school. The focus of the curriculum is college prep with a focus on maintaining the dignity and character of each learner. Ben enjoys baseball, art/drawing and aggressive skating. He has already had an article published in a skating magazine."

Standing there, looking into the forgiving sun that hits me on my soft face, warming my body and soul. And, slowly looking back at the rough, loose cobblestone path as the damp newly fallen golden leaves cover the stones like coins from an ancient kingdom. Only to be removed by a continuous breeze that contains a slight chill which whistles through the naked trees overhead. The blue sky blinds the objects that fly through the air braking the breeze in directions that have never been seen before. And, all of this in a sensation greater than god. As I inhale the smell of the damp soil mixed with smashed berries my nose rings with enjoyment. But at the same time it burns my lungs faster than my first cigarette. It's smooth and it continues. Then the blood starts to rush through my body like speeding cars on an overt highway.

I look at my worn down, dirty, and silty smelly clothes with a stench that can not be labeled; are wet from the sweat and tears caused by this foolish and twisted path. My shoes are worn down to the last treads like old beat-up Indian moccasins. As the memories come into my soft spoken mind, I look at the leaves of gold that are being blown away from the path, to be shown only to the eyes that listen. Then, in some unreal way the path seems to be swallowed up by the greenish overgrowth which crowds the path,like a foolish beggar. Before my very eyes the path is gone and the nature around it continues were it let off; never knowing where the existing path is. As I stare into the deep lonely woods, I begin to understand my fears, then my weak but hypocritical heart deflates at a rapid rate like a balloon losing air and closes into a cold darkness.

Mikaela Crank is a Navajo girl, almost a woman now, from Arizona, whose first writing came to us via a prize-winning essay in a national contest in Skipping Stones*—and who still sends us her heart's musings from time to time, I'm happy to say.*

Two by Mikaela Crank:

Believe

We lived such a long life
Lets not be slashed by a knife
What is our future going to be
Where will we live?
Where will we die?
How are we free?

We're trapped in this world,
our body is curled
Heaven is what we should see
For that is a place for you and me
Sitting there in a golden throne
God sits so mighty so bold
All I have to do is believe
And I'll be set free

Jesus Christ is my answer
My life set straight
Not a painting so blur

He is there at my side
Helping every hour
He washed away my angry tide
I pray to him
As he blesses this world

Doing his best to arrest sin
He, the Son The eternal one
No more tears
No more pain
Love is what we gain

Now I know there is a place
As I run this race
Heaven up above
As free as a dove.

Believe.
—John 20:31

Jesus Christ

As the blood spilt on the ground
All you can hear are mocking sounds

Satan thought he defeated God
When Jesus gave his head a last nod

No, that day was a day of eternal life
A ticket to heaven, peace, grace
Yes, this is a real place

Our true savior, who died for us
No, not leaving our body to rust

To free our soul, to reign with him
Our body to completely rid all sin

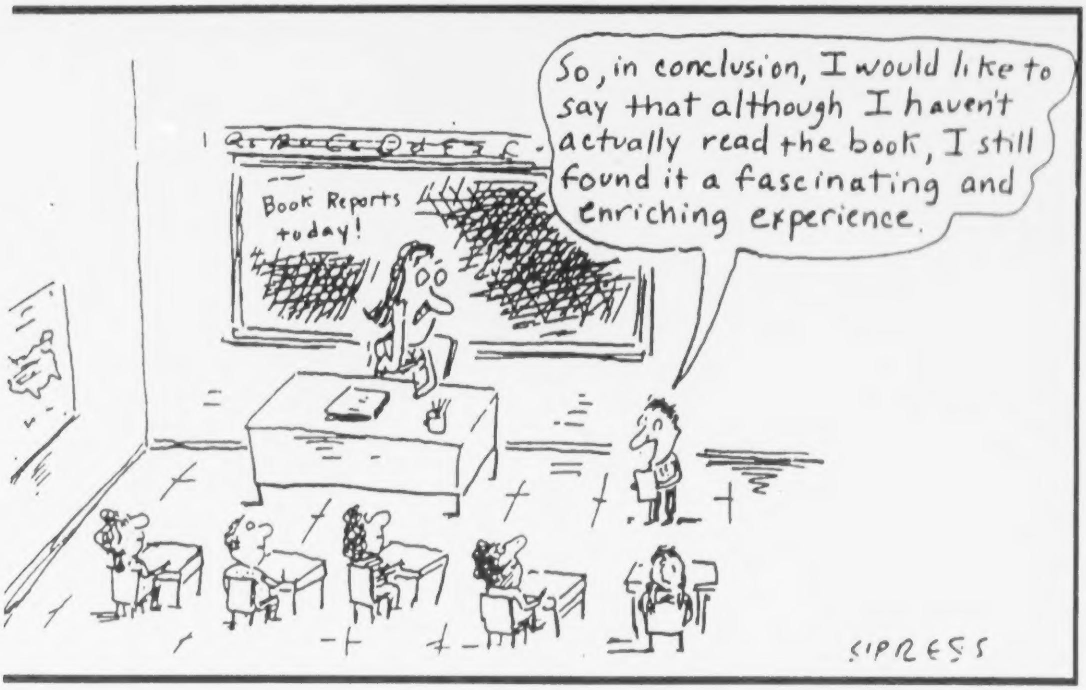
But we must go into the harvest field
With a belt of truth, a sword, & a
faith in a shield

Spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth
For He is coming soon, rebirth.

—Mark 16:15 and John 10:16

JUST FOR FUN

(sent on by Robert Kastelic)


So, in conclusion, I would like to say that although I haven't actually read the book, I still found it a fascinating and enriching experience.
Book Reports today!
SIPRESS

Buttered Cats and Other Mysteries

(from Andy Smallman, gleaned from PSCS' on-line sharings)

If you drop a buttered piece of bread, it will fall on the floor butter-side down. If a cat is dropped from a window or other high and towering place, it will land on its feet.

But what if you attach a buttered piece of bread, butter-side up to a cat's back and toss them both out the window? Will the cat land on its feet? Or will the butter splat on the ground?

Even if you are too lazy to do the experiment yourself. you should be able to deduce the obvious result. The laws of butterology demand that the butter must hit the ground, and the equally strict laws of feline aerodynamics demand that the cat can not smash its furry back. If the combined construct were to land, nature would have no way to resolve this paradox. Therefore it simply does not fall.

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That's right, you clever mortal (well, as clever as a mortal can get), you have discovered the secret of antigravity! A buttered cat will, when released, quickly move to a height where the forces of cat-twisting and butter repulsion are in equilibrium. This equilibrium point can be modified by scraping off some of the butter, providing lift, or removing some of the cat's limbs, allowing descent.

Most of the civilized species of the Universe already use this principle to drive their ships while within a planetary system. The loud humming heard by most sighters of UFOs is, in fact, the purring of several hundred tabbies.

The one obvious danger is, of course, if the cats manage to eat the bread off their backs they will instantly plummet. Of course the cats will land on their feet, but this usually doesn't do them much good, since right after they make their graceful landing several tons of red-hot starship and pissed off aliens crash on top of them.

And now a few words on solving the problem of creating a ship using the aforementioned anti-gravity device.

One could power a ship by means of cats held in suspended animation (say, about 90 degrees Celsius) with buttered bread strapped to their backs, thus avoiding the possibility of collisions due to temperamental felines. More importantly, how do you steer, once the cats are all held in stasis?

I offer a modest proposal:

We all know that wearing a white shirt at an Italian restaurant is a guaranteed way to take a trip to the laundromat. Plaster the outside of your ship with white shirts. Place four nozzles symmetrically around the ship, which is, of course, saucer shaped. Fire tomato sauce out in proportion to the directions you want to go. The ship, drawn by the shirts, will automatically follow the sauce. If you use t-shirts, you won't go as fast as you would by using, say, expensive dress shirts.

This does not work as well in deep gravity wells, since the tomato sauce (now falling down a black hole, perhaps) will drag the ship with it, despite the counter force of the anti-gravity cat/butter machine. Your only hope at that point is to jettison enormous quantities of Tide. This will create the well-known Gravitational Tidal Force.

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JUST FOR FUN:

Buttered Cats & Other Mysteries

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9/8/98

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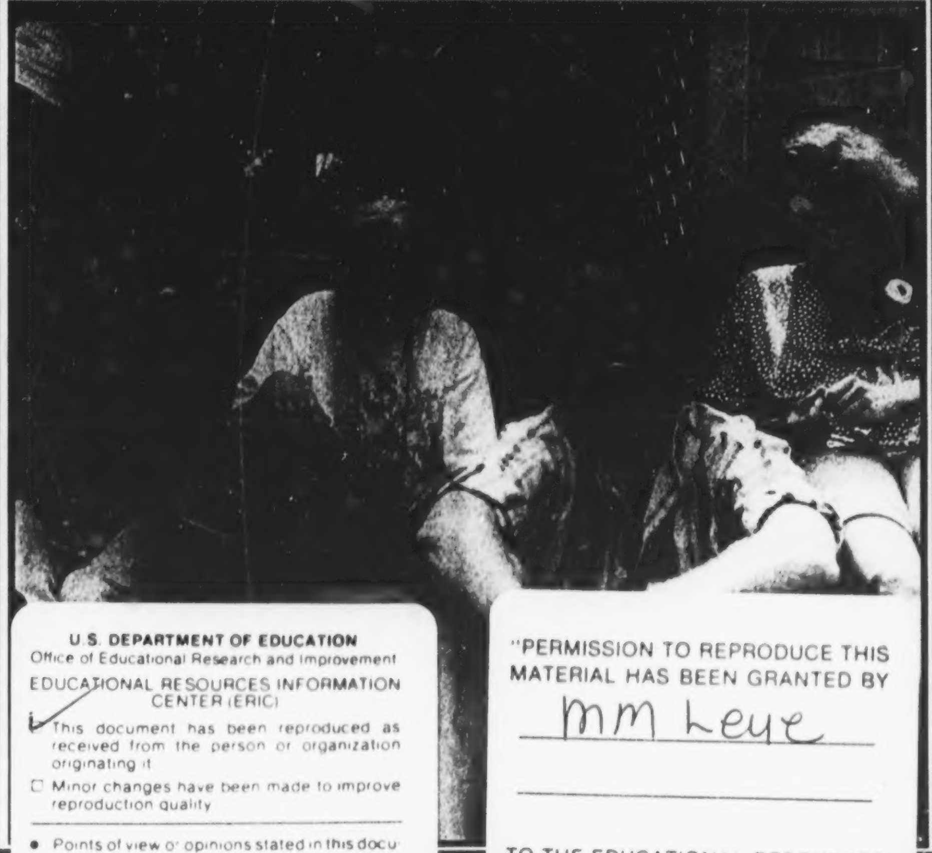
the Journal of Alternative Education



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the Journal of Alternative Education

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

This issue is longer than usual—twenty-five pages longer, in fact—because it's the last issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ* I shall be editing/publishing, and so I wanted to get into it everything I really *had* to print!

Saying this creates very mixed feelings! On the one hand, I feel tears rising close to the surface. On the other hand, it's a kind of relief, because the stress of keeping up with all the aspects of BOTH *ΣΚΟΛΕ* and the *Journal of Family Life* had become a bit overwhelming, and, too, it had become evident to me from a couple of responses from readers that the message I was trying to convey could probably be done far better by someone other than myself! My insistence on looking at every issue from a highly personal point of view struck one reader as offensive, and my format struck another as quaint and outmoded! I've come to realize that the issue of good education is far too important to be endangered or trivialized by my idiosyncrasies. If *ΣΚΟΛΕ* is slated to survive, it will be without that ingredient—or it won't!

So it is with both sadness and joy that I can announce (if all goes well) the passing of the torch to Arun Toké, current editor of *Skipping Stones,* with the hope that his Board will see fit to approve the plan—and, if they do, that they or he will also continue those aspects of the journal which seem appropriate and worth keeping—especially, the policy I have enjoyed so much of offering a forum, even if all too limited in readership, to gifted, dedicated educators like John Taylor Gatto, Orin Domenico, Chris Mercogliano, Dayle Bethel, Elizabeth Byrne Ferm, John Lawry, John Potter (both of them!), Bill Kaul, Ron Miller, Bob Kastelic, Richard Lewis, Jon Scott, Pat Montgomery, Emanuel Pariser, Richard Prystowsky, Sandy Hurst, Nat Needle, Martha Goff Stoner, Jane Tompkins, Jerry Mintz, Ted Strunck, Carlos Bonilla, Alan Bonsteel, Matt Hern, Jeannine Parvati Baker, Dan Greenberg (malgré soi!), Jon Bliss, Kate Kerman, Bill Ellis, Arthur Gladstone, Ken Lebensold, and all my wonderful kids! And lots of others! My wish is that their "medium" now grow into the scope they so richly deserve, with all my love!

ΣΚΟΛΕ has been my chief life project now since 1985—all with the dedicated help of members of the Free School Community co-editors: Connie Frisbee-Houde, Ellen Becker, Larry Becker, Betsy Mercogliano, Chris Mercogliano and Frank Houde. I shall miss it very much, and especially the wonderful contacts with both subscribers and contributors! I'd love to hear from you online!

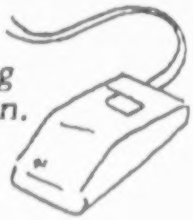
SPECIAL READERS' SECTION

Since this is my last issue, I feel free to include whatever I choose, regardless of length! The following journal came from Jon Bliss, and gives you the unmistakeable flavor of his and Laura's wonderful school. My scanner has quit on me, so I copied it like a graphic and pasted it together to fit into three pages, which is why it looks a bit blurry:

notes from an east hill journal

Rowen pulls the camera from its foam cradle.

Twisting off the lens cap, she sights into the viewfinder in the direction of the goat shed. She shakes her head; the light is wrong. Moving to the left, she squats in the snow, hunches her shoulders, and begins to turn the F-Stop control as she moves the camera across the scene, looking for a place where light/dark contrast and composition some together. Her movement slows as the viewfinder passes over the hay bales, then finds a spot where the steeply slanting late-afternoon sun highlights individual strands of hay against the dark interior of the shed. She focuses, then presses the shutter.



Unicorns are so high-strung and they need lots *of attention. Allie and Marissa found out the hard way when they left Thunder and Starbell alone outside during practice period and the* *two impatient beasts chewed through their leads and started walking on car hoods. What a mess...what a racket! (what unhappy drivers!) Now the girls always exercise their Unicorns thoroughly before coming in to class, being sure to run through their paces and brush them well. On most school days they can be seen prancing up and down the road in front of the Main House at about half past nine in the morning. Why, there they go now....*

Random Thought: We lose something precious when schools become training grounds and families begin to keep their distance. Schools should be joyful places where the community feels welcome. Have we figured out how to do that consistently at East Hill? Hardly. But more often than not, it's easy to imagine children, without compulsion, spending the day learning here. This is our greatest asset, far greater than a teaching philosophy (actually it is a teaching philosophy): kids will fight to be here, ask to be driven in on snow days (it's happened!), and make this school a key part of their lives and dreams.

This October when East Hill parents learned that we'd likely run short of money before the end of the year, they agreed to raise it themselves.

Now, this may not seem so unusual. After all, independent schools everywhere raise money constantly (we do that too), and parents often play a major role in those efforts. And you might guess that East Hill parents have invested heavily in their childrens' school.

Now, this may not seem so unusual. After all, independent schools everywhere raise money constantly (we do that too), and parents often play a major role in those efforts. And you might guess that East Hill parents have invested heavily in their childrens' school.

But here in southern Vermont, East Hill's progressive constituency is richer in talent than dollars. Also, the State is changing the way it funds education. No one knows exactly how taxes and the economy will be effected, and everyone's a little wary of requests for money. After all, you can't get water from a stone. But East Hill parents were not to be deterred, and they planned a series of fund raisers to help us meet the budget. These workshops and events call on the unique talents of the community, involve parents in a critical aspect of East Hill's development, and share valuable skills while spreading the word about what we're trying to do.

In an atmosphere of "soft" support for schools, perhaps we can be excused for a bit of pride in the enthusiasm our East Hill families bring to their involvement here.

Thanks to everyone who has supported us this year, monetarily, materially, and emotionally...stay tuned for the June fund raising letter!

Jon

ON-LINE PHILOSOPHY CLASS FROM PUGET SOUND COMMUNITY SCHOOL (excerpted):

I was privileged to be invited to join an on-line philosophy of education class initiated and sponsored by Andy Smallman as part of his Puget Sound Community School's curriculum during the winter of 1998. I reproduce some of that provocative, thought-producing multilogue here to let our readers in on the sense of aliveness and spontaneous excitement generated by the class. Thanks, Andy, Ari, Kirk and Betsy! It starts with a word from Andy about the initial assignment:

Everyone,

Here's the article [Dan Greenberg's "Back to Basics"] I promised. I want to use this as a starting spot for our PSCS Philosophy Dialogue, scheduled to begin the week of January 5th. Again, you are receiving this message if you signed up for the class, are a PSCS staff or board member, or I thought you might be interested in participating.

Regards,
Andy [Smallman]

BACK TO BASICS

by Daniel Greenberg

Why Go To School?

For people who like to think through the important questions in life for themselves, Sudbury Valley stands as a challenge to the accepted answers.

Intellectual Basics

The first phrase that pops into everyone's mind is: "We go to school to learn." That's the intellectual goal. It comes before all the others. So much so, that "getting an education " has come to mean "learning"—a bit narrow, to be sure, but it gets the priorities clear.

Then why don't people learn more in schools today? Why all the complaints? Why the seemingly limitless expenditures just to tread water, let alone to progress?

The answer is embarrassingly simple. Schools today are institutions in which "learning" is taken to mean "being taught." You want people to learn? Teach them! You want them to learn more? Teach them more! And more! Work them harder. Drill them longer. But learning is a process you do, not a process that is done to you! That is true of everyone. It's basic.

What makes people learn? Funny anyone should ask. Over two thousand years ago, Aristotle started his most important book with the universally accepted answer: "Human beings are naturally curious." Descartes put it slightly differently, also at the beginning of his major work: "I think, therefore I am." Learning, thinking, actively using your mind—it's the essence of being human. It's natural.

More so even than the great drives—hunger, thirst, sex. When you're engrossed in something—the key word is "engrossed"—you forget about all the other drives until they overwhelm you. Even rats do that, as was shown a long time ago.

Who would think of forcing people to eat, or drink, or have sex? (Of course, I'm not talking about people who have a specific disability that affects their drives; nor is anything I am writing here about education meant to apply to people who have specific mental impairments, which may need to be dealt with in special, clinical ways.) No one sticks people's faces in bowls of food, every hour on the hour, to be sure they'll eat; no one closets people with mates, eight periods a day, to make sure they'll couple.

Does that sound ridiculous? How much more ridiculous is it, then, to try to force people to do that which above all else comes most naturally to them! And everyone knows just how widespread this overpowering curiosity is. All books on childrearing go to great lengths to instruct parents on how to keep their little children out of things—especially once they are mobile. We don't stand around pushing our one year olds to explore.

On the contrary, we tear our hair out as they tear our house apart, we seek ways to harness them, imprison them in play pens. And the older they get, the more "mischief" they get into. Did you ever deal with a ten year old? A teenager?

People go to school to learn. To learn, they must be left alone and given time. When they need help, it should be given, if we want the learning to proceed at its own natural pace. But make no mistake: if a person is determined to learn, they will overcome every obstacle and learn in spite of everything. So you don't have to help; help just makes the process a little quicker. Overcoming obstacles is one of the main activities of learning. It does no harm to leave a few.

But if you bother the person, if you insist the person stop his or her own natural learning and do instead what you want, between 9:00 AM and 9:50, and between 10:00 AM and 10:50 and so forth, not only won't the person learn what s/he has a passion to learn, but s/he will also hate you, hate what you are forcing upon them, and lose all taste for learning, at least temporarily.

Every time you think of a class in one of those schools out there, just imagine the teacher was forcing spinach and milk and carrots and sprouts (all those good things) down each student's throat with a giant ramrod. Sudbury Valley leaves its students be. Period. No maybes. No exceptions. We help if we can when we are asked. We never get in the way. People come here primarily to learn. And that's what they all do, every day, all day.

Vocational Basics

The nitty-gritty of going to school always comes up next, after "learning." When it comes right down to it, most people don't really give a damn what or how much they or their children learn at school, as long as they are able to have a successful career—to get a good job. That means money, status, advancement. The better the job you get, the better was the school you went to.

That's why Phillips Andover, or Harvard, rank so highly. Harvard grads start out way up the ladder in every profession. They are grateful, and when they grow up, they perpetuate this by bestowing the best they have to offer on the new Harvard grads they hire; and by giving big donations to Harvard. So it goes for Yale, Dartmouth and all the others.

So what kind of a school is most likely today, at the end of the twentieth century, to prepare a student best for a good career? We don't really have to struggle with the answer. Everyone is writing about it. This is the post industrial age. The age of information. The age of services. The age of imagination, creativity, and entrepreneurialism. The future belongs to people who can stretch their minds to handle, mold, shape, organize, play with new material, old material, new ideas, old ideas, new facts, old facts. These kind of activities don't take place in the average school even on an extra-curricular basis. Let alone all day.

At Sudbury Valley, these activities are, in a sense, the whole curriculum. Does it sound far-fetched? Perhaps to an untrained ear. But history and experience are on our side. How else to explain that fact that all our graduates, barring none, who wish to go on to college and graduate school, always get in, usually to the schools of first choice? With no transcripts, no records, no reports, no oral or written school recommendations. What do college admissions officers see in these students? Why do they accept them—often, grab them? Why do these trained administrators, wallowing in 'A' averages, glowing letters from teachers, high SAT scores—why do they take Sudbury Valley grads?

Of course you know the answer, even if it is hard to admit; it runs so against the grain. These trained professionals saw in our students bright, alert, confident, creative spirits. The dream of every advanced school.

The record speaks for itself. Our students are in a huge array of professions (or schools, in the case of more recent graduates) and vocations. They are doctors, dancers, musicians, businessmen, artists, scientists, writers, auto mechanics, carpenters ... No need to go on. You can meet them if you wish.

If a person came to me today and said, simply: "To what school should I send my child if I want to be assured that she will get the best opportunity for career advancement in the field of her choice?" I would answer without the least hesitation, "The best in the country for that purpose is Sudbury Valley." Alas, at present it is the only type of school in the country that does the job, with an eye to the future.

As far as vocations are concerned, Sudbury Valley has encountered Future Shock head on and overcome it. No longer is there any need to be mired in the past.

Moral Basics

Now we come to a touchy subject. Schools should produce good people. That's as broad a platitude as—mother and apple pie. Obviously, we don't want schools to produce bad people. How to produce good people? There's the rub. I dare say no one really knows the answer, at least from what I see around me. But at least we know something about the subject. We know, and have (once again) known from ancient times, the absolutely essential ingredient for moral action; the ingredient without which action is at best amoral, at worst, immoral.

The ingredient is personal responsibility. All ethical behavior presupposes it. To be ethical you must be capable of choosing a path and accepting full responsibility for the choice, and for the consequences. You cannot claim to be a passive instrument of fate, of God, of other men, of force majeure; such a claim instantly renders all distinctions between good and evil pointless and empty. The clay that has been fashioned into the most beautiful pot in the world can lay no claim to virtue.

Ethics begins from the proposition that a human being is responsible for his or her acts. This is a given. Schools cannot change this, or diminish it. Schools can, however, either acknowledge it or deny it.

Unfortunately, virtually all schools today choose in fact to deny that students are personally responsible for their acts, even while the leaders of these schools pay lip service to the concept.

The denial is threefold: schools do not permit students to choose their course of action fully; they do not permit students to embark on the course, once chosen; and they do not permit students to suffer the consequences of the course, once taken. Freedom of choice, freedom of action, freedom to bear the results of action—these are the three great freedoms that constitute personal responsibility.

It is no news that schools restrict, as a matter of fundamental policy, the freedoms of choice and action. But does it surprise you that schools restrict freedom to bear the consequences of one's actions? It shouldn't. It has become a tenet of modern education that the psyche of a student suffers harm to the extent that it is buffeted by the twin evils of adversity and failure. "Success breeds success" is the password today; encouragement, letting a person down easy, avoiding disappointing setbacks, the list goes on. Small wonder that our schools are not noted for their ethical training. They excuse their failure by saying that moral education belongs in the home. To be sure, it does. But does that exclude it from school?

Back to basics. At Sudbury Valley, the three freedoms flourish. The buck stops with each person. Responsibility is universal, ever present, real. If you have any doubts, come and look at the school. Watch the students in action. Study the judicial system. Attend a graduation, where a student must convince an assemblage of peers that s/he is ready to be responsible for himself or herself in the community at large, just as the person has been at school.

Does Sudbury Valley produce good people? I think it does. And bad people too. But the good and the bad have exercised personal responsibility for their actions at all times, and they realize that they are fully accountable for their deeds. That's what sets Sudbury Valley apart.

Social Basics

Some time ago it became fashionable to ask our schools to look after the social acclimatization of students. Teach them to get along. Rid our society of social misfits by nipping the problem in the bud, at school.

Ambitious? Perhaps. But oh, how many people have struggled with reports from school about their own—or their child's—social adaptations, or lack of them! Strange, isn't it, how badly people sometimes screw up what they do? I mean, trying to socialize people is hard enough; but the schools seem almost methodically to have created ways of defeating this goal.

Take age segregation, for starters. What genius looked around and got the idea that it was meaningful to divide people sharply by age? Does such division take place naturally anywhere? In industry, do all twenty-one year old laborers work separately from twenty years olds or twenty-three year olds? In business, are there separate rooms for thirty year old executives and thirty-one year old executives? Do two year olds stay apart from one year olds and three year olds in the playgrounds? Where, where on earth was this idea conceived? Is anything more socially damaging than segregating children by year for fourteen—often eighteen—years. Or take frequent segregation by sex, even in coed schools, for varieties of activities. Or the vast chasm between children and adults—have you ever observed how universal it is for children not to look adults in the eye?

And now let's peek into the social situation created for children within their own age group. If the schools make it almost impossible for a twelve year old to relate in a normal human fashion to eleven year olds, thirteen year olds, adults, etc., what about other twelve year olds? No such luck. The primary, almost exclusive mode of relationship fostered by schools among children in the same class is—competition! Cut-throat competition. The pecking order is the all-in-all. Who is better than whom, who smarter, faster, taller, handsomer—and, of course, who is worse, stupider, slower, shorter, uglier. If ever a system was designed effectively to produce competitive, obnoxious, insecure, paranoid, social misfits, the prevailing schools have managed it.

Back to basics. In the real world, the most important social attribute for a stable, healthy society is cooperation. In the real world, the most important form of competition is against oneself, against goals set for and by a person for that person's own achievement. In the real world, interpersonal competition for its own sake is widely recognized as pointless and destructive—yes, even in large corporations and in sports. In the real world, and in Sudbury Valley, which is a school for the real world.

Political Basics

We take it for granted that schools should foster good citizenship. Universal education in this country in particular always kept one eye sharply focused on the goal of making good Americans out of us all.

We all know what America stands for. The guiding principles were clearly laid down by our founding fathers, and steadily elaborated ever since. This country is a democratic republic. No king, no royalty, no nobility, no inherent hierarchy, no dictator. A government of the people, by the people, for the people. In matters political, majority rule. No taxation without representation.

This country is a nation of laws. No arbitrary authority, no capricious government now giving, now taking. Due process. This country is a people with rights. Inherent rights. Rights so dear to us that our forefathers refused to ratify the constitution without a Bill of Rights added in writing, immediately.

Knowing all this, we would expect—nay, insist (one would think)—that the schools, in training their students to contribute productively to the political stability and growth of America, would:

- be democratic and non-autocratic
- be governed by clear rules and due process
- be guardians of individual rights of students.

A student growing up in schools having these features would be ready to move right into society at large.

But the schools, in fact, are distinguished by the total absence of each of the three cardinal American values listed. They are autocratic—all of them, even "progressive" schools. They are lacking in clear guidelines and totally innocent of due process as it applies to alleged disrupters. They do not recognize the rights of minors.

All except Sudbury Valley, which was founded on these three principles. I think it is safe to say that the individual liberties so cherished by our ancestors and by each succeeding generation will never be really secure until our youth, throughout the crucial formative years of their minds and spirits, are nurtured in a school environment that embodies these basic American truths.

Back To Basics

So you see, Sudbury Valley was started in 1968 by people who thought very hard about schools, about what schools should be and should do, about what education is all about in America today.

We went back to basics. And we stayed there. And we jealously guarded these basics against any attempts to compromise them. As we and our successors shall surely continue to stand guard. Intellectual creativity, professional excellence, personal responsibility, social toleration, political liberty—all these are the finest creations of the human spirit. They are delicate blossoms that require constant care. All of us who are associated with Sudbury Valley are proud to contribute to this care.

The preceding is an essay which appeared several years back in the Sudbury Valley School newsletter. It is available in a book of essays which appeared in that forum titled "The Sudbury

Valley School Experience." The Sudbury Valley School Experience, and other books by the SVS press, are available by writing to The Sudbury Valley School, 2 Winch Street, Framingham, MA 01701 or call (508) 877-3030.

Permission to freely copy and distribute this document is given. For other free literature about SVS available electronically, check

http://www.tiac.net/users/sdavid/svs.

Kirk [from Australia]:

I love this SVS book, and have read it to my classes, along with A.S. Neill, *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, and some others. I feel inspired, when I read it, and sad at the gaps between SVS's vision and the situation my students and I often find ourselves. I would dearly love to be part of a school evolving into or adopting such a vision. As a believer, though, I have some questions. I wonder what else seems to have affected his thoughts on this, because it seems a bit angry and vindictive in his wording.

Betsy [another class member]:

A friend—it seems like a long time ago—told me something about her approach to working with students that's really stuck, something like, "The first thing parents have to do is to grieve their own schooling." I wonder if there's something which he's responding to.

Kirk again:

The word "teach" seems to draw the fire. What is the action of teaching, though, besides the seemingly arrogant meaning of the verb "to teach," which Greenberg seems to use as "force," maybe "lecture," "show to a passive audience." I also wonder if there's a place for challenge; it doesn't have to mean "force." Almost every great learning experience I've had, hardly any in a school, has involved getting to know intimately the footprints of those whose tradition I'm taking up: music, Zen Buddhism, outdoor education. I've asked for the teacher to show me where the footprints lie, and depended on teachers to challenge me when I can only present half of a picture. Do others see it differently? Greenberg seems to leave room for such a relationship, but does not really seem to welcome it.

The gist of my question: Is there a time when Greenberg, or PSCS, would agree to let a student and teacher enter into a contract with the goal of completion, or mastery, to a certain level? In theory, at least, a diploma says you've rounded out yourself, set and attained some goals, and have studied the same thing the teacher(s) has (have) mastered, plus making the tradition your own. Sort of like getting certified to be a lifeguard, or a doctor. Is there room for this? Should there be?

I wonder if there should be a difference in the philosophy of a school between the notion of a hierarchy and a domination relationship. Hierarchies aren't bad, but natural and inescapable, I think, and as such, some people will have more depth of information than others. Domination is different, which seems to be what Greenberg is describing as teaching.

I also wonder what ideology really has to do with the success of SVS, compared to the white upper middle class suburb of Boston where SVS is located. I think of the 42nd Street School I read about once, which adopted a Summerhillian vision in a lower-class urban neighborhood, and lasted one year just barely. There are so many factors, not the least of which are the families and community, economics and the personality of the students and teachers. In this 42nd St. school the one teacher who the students wanted to be with and who they respected was a traditional teacher in the midst of the other teachers.

What does this mean in PSCS? Now my daughter's awake, so I'll stop.

Ari [Denver area, CO]:

I became familiar with Sudbury Valley when a school modeled on it, Alpine Valley, opened in the Denver area (where I live). One of my friends is on its board of directors. So I was familiar with Greenberg's arguments before reading the article. I share Kirk Fisher's concerns about Sudbury's approach: they seem to believe that "teaching" is generally worthless and even counter-productive, but is this (or need this be) the case? I think not. I believe that Sudbury sets up a false-alternative. On the one hand, they present "teaching" as something forced upon a passive audience, as something the "teacher" is trying to "do TO" the students, as something which prevents the natural development of thinking of learning in children. The alternative to this system is that of Sudbury Valley, in which students are left "free" to pursue their own projects with little or no supervision.

I think the root cause of this false-alternative is Sudbury's ("Sudbury" taken as short-hand for all those who support the Sudbury system) reification of the current American system of "teaching" and "education". I.e., Sudbury has taken the *present* model of teaching and treated it as if it is the essence of teaching per se. I think this is wrong, and intellectually dangerous.

The "third way" I propose is a system of teaching, entered into with the consent and interest of the students. I agree with

Sudbury that students should not be forced to learn, which is a futile project anyway, and that students have to want to learn and learn "naturally" if given the opportunity.

But the fact remains that teaching is of great value. It is not the sum of education, but it is necessary for a timely and complete education. Teachers are able to organize information to students and make it more readily comprehensible; they are able to answer students' questions; they are able to help students learn much faster than they might otherwise; they are able to inform students about possible areas of interest and guide them into these areas.

This does NOT mean that teaching has to be forced. Parents and teachers can communicate with children, and explain to them the value of knowing certain subjects. Willing students will agree to "teaching," much as I agreed to go to college and fulfill a certain curriculum.

I believe Greenberg is fundamentally mistaken in thinking that children can master a full education efficaciously on their own. Greenberg writes:

> The future belongs to people who can stretch their minds to handle, mold, shape, organize, play with new material, old material, new ideas, old ideas, new facts, old facts. These kind of activities don't take place in the average school even on an extra-curricular basis. Let alone all day. At Sudbury Valley, these activities are, in a sense, the whole curriculum.

I do not argue with Greenberg's assessment of the current political education system, which I think is horrible. However, this can hardly be taken as an indictment of teaching per se. Obviously, children must learn how to "handle, mold, shape, and organize" material and ideas. It is my contention that teaching can facilitate this process. For instance, I was taught to read, by my mother (who taught others to read in her pre-school). I could hardly have "handled" written ideas without this knowledge. People can hardly "handle" statistics and mathematics without a knowledge of mathematics, and such knowledge can best be acquired via an organized, hierarchical course on mathematics. It is true that people can ably learn math on their own from books, but it is equally true that a competent teacher can facilitate the learning process by responding to a student's individual troubles and questions.

In "organizing ideas old and new," I have found it helpful to know grammar. And, it turns out that much of my grammar I learned from my ninth grade English teacher. (I learned most of it just by my own reading, I grant, but the teaching also was very helpful to me.) In short, we do not help children "handle" ideas and knowledge merely by throwing them to the winds and encouraging them to "do things." We do them a great service by explaining to them the value of knowing certain subjects, and by presenting to them these subjects in an organized fashion once their interest has been peaked. I.e., by teaching them.

To support my claims, I offer several of my own experiences. First I review an instance in which I indeed learned largely on my own, undirected. This to note that I do not disagree with Greenberg that children—that people in general—should pursue their own projects and learn independently. Indeed, I think "teaching" should play a relatively minor role in a person's life (certainly much less of a role than in the present system, in which "teaching" is typically atrocious). This case is of my learning of libertarian thought. My father introduced me to two books: *Free to Choose* by Milton Friedman, and *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. From these two works, which I devoured without any prodding, I soon discovered the works of the Austrian Objectivist scholars, and assorted other libertarian authors.

However, I also joyously submitted myself to "teaching" in these areas. I have attended seminars on Austrian Economics, Public Choice Economics, Objectivism philosophy, libertarian theory, and "post-libertarian" thinking. These seminars consisted mostly of classes, with teachers and students. The students were willing and interested; the teachers were for the most part engaging and competent. This comes close to my ideals of "teaching."

I mentioned that I learned much grammar in political highschool. There too I learned quite a lot of math, despite the general incompetence of my math teachers. What was important to me was the structure, the deadlines, more than the teachers, but, with able teachers, the teaching part of school would have been much more meaningful to me. I willingly took my math work home to figure out the problems.

In college I had the best teacher I've ever seen in action. This was at Pepperdine, with a philosophy professor named David Gibson. I love this man, because of what he taught me. His classes are strict lecture format, with ample opportunities for students to ask questions. I never have taken notes so rapidly as I did in his classes; I couldn't hardly make my pen keep up with my thoughts and Gibson's insights. Dr. Gibson presented his material in a highly organized and thoughtful way; he taught us the material. I learned more about philosophy from him in a short period of time than I ever could have learned on my own. I am eternally grateful to this man because of what he taught me. He was able to teach both history and analytical thinking; I had a logic class with him and am quite sure I would never have learned logic so quickly or ably as I did with him around to explain to me and answer my questions. (The teaching of logic closely parallels the teaching of math.)

So, the nature of knowledge as well as my own experiences support my contention that teaching is a necessary part of education (when pursued appropriately). I believe Sudbury does a great disservice to its students by discouraging the practice and art of Teaching.

I was originally going to keep this off-line with Kirk, but then I thought that it is indeed very relevant to our discussion of education. (Politics, I mean.) I wrote:

> "Sudbury's insistence upon "democracy" within its school is counter-productive and downright silly. The practice is based on the false belief that "democracy" somehow has contributed to the greatness of the US, when in fact our nation is great only to the extent that it has remained NON-democratic; that is, free-market."

To which Kirk responded:

> "Oh no, I'm not agreeing to any of this. Corporations are not great. 'Our' country is not doing great by free market activities. Maybe I'm confused, though. How do you define greatness?"

I want to respond on a number of "levels." First, even if it were true that democracy worked great as a political system, that would in no way imply that it should work great for a school. As another poster noted, children aren't necessarily capable of making such decisions. I mean, ask a seven year-old about who should be hired on school administration?? Come on!

But what about democracy as a political system? I would note at the outset that "corporations" are legislatively defined entities—and that legislature came in to being (you guessed it) through our allegedly democratic system of government. In truth, many aspects of the modern corporation, such as limited liability, are political boondoggles intended not to further but to restrict the free market. That said, the corporation does serve an important function which would continue with a free market: it allows a great number of people to pool their resources to pursue industrial projects possible only on a large scale.

I would also remind you that our current school system—which I assume we all believe works abysmally—was started and is maintained by so-called "democracy." In fact, our political school system was created, quite explicitly, to create people who conformed to the "common culture" and respected the State. You are quite correct that "our country is not doing great by free market activities", but you are correct precisely because our country DOES NOT HAVE A FREE MARKET! It is a common error, to blithely assume that the system of government in which we live is free market, but this is just nonsense. Our State spends over HALF of GDP and regulates nearly every aspect of nearly every type of social transaction or relationship. If our country HAD a free market, it would be "doing great." I define "greatness" in the socio-political realm rather broadly, to include both economic prosperity and psychological and sociological health of people.

—Ari

[*To which Kirk responded by giving us more of his and Ari's one-to-one communications:*]

Kirk

Dear Ari,

I hope you won't mind raising some of your post as a discussion.

> Ari: Sudbury has taken the *present* model of teaching and treated it as if it is the essence of teaching per se. I think this is wrong, and intellectually dangerous.

I agree, and I'm curious: how do you see a danger in this? I also have to ask, since we both seem to question this theory, how do we respond to the claims of success Greenberg sites? Is there a proof in the pudding here, that theory can't explain? I think so, with Sudbury and Summerhill, but ideology doesn't capture it. What is it? Privileged children? Caring houses?

> Ari: For instance, I was taught to read, by my mother (who taught others to read in her pre-school). I could hardly have "handled" written ideas without this knowledge.

I think this could be considered a flawed example, since many children learn to read despite, without, or with adult teaching, just as they learn to speak, walk, program computers, and negotiate contracts.

> Ari: People can hardly "handle" statistics and mathematics without a knowledge of mathematics, and such knowledge

can best be acquired via an organized, hierarchical course on mathematics.

Who says? I think we have to make room for different kinds of learning, and some learn best without an organized, hierarchical course. Me, for instance, definitely. I get D's in such courses, but end up flourishing in looser, otherwise-guided structure. I'm an autonomous learner, and many are.

By the way, I teach best to autonomous learners, as well, I think. This comes back to Betsy Herbert, "we have to grieve [or deal with] our own schooling first." You and I have to realize whatever perspectives we come up with relate to our own experience, and don't necessarily translate into generalized statements.

It's not that I disagree with you—I think teaching is important as well—but I don't think we can disregard some other aspects of Sudbury. I don't think universal models work, either way. Some kids really do much better when they're "thrown to the wind." They flourish, they're happy, they realize the work they want to do and do it well. Some ask to see their challenge laid out before them, first. Some like organized, hierarchical classes.

The thing I don't get around in any way except in the Sudbury model is the bigger picture. Whose life is this anyway? Does a child have the option out?

> **Andy wrote before:** *With all of that said, let me turn to this question of Kirk's, "Is there a time when Greenberg, or PSCS would agree to let a student and teacher enter into a contract with the goal of completion, or mastery, to a certain level?"*
>
> *My answer for PSCS is yes, provided either could opt out at any time. I know this may fly in the face of "a contract with the goal of completion," but I really wonder how one defines completion. Is it completion as defined by the teacher (or master), completion defined by the student, or open to a changing definition once the study has begun. I know that I, where I am now, do not want to be forced to pursue a path of study once I feel I'm done with it, despite where I initially thought my interest would take me. But I do want to be aided in knowing what the consequences of stopping may be (and I think a master will have the perspective to do this). So armed with this perspective I can make a better informed decision.*

I think awareness of failure, quitting, and the always present option to do either is an essential part of any learning. But I also think the option to not even try is important. I'm thinking of the Plains Indians who have "Contraries," men who just said "naaah."

—Kirk

Ari: I thought I might make a few comments about the Sudbury Valley discussions before moving on to the new reading. Andrew had some concerns with my critique of the Sudbury approach:

> Andy: *I'm no expert on Sudbury Valley and never, ever want to claim to be, but I don't think it's their intent to discourage "teaching." I think what they are trying to do is eliminate coercion in education. There, indeed, are classes at Sudbury, but they are initiated by the students. Staff members, many gifted in the "practice & art of teaching," I'm sure, who facilitate these classes.*

I am aware of these classes, and I grant you that Sudbury in effect "teaches" its students, if in a limited context. However, this practice is inconsistent with their rhetoric, for Greenberg writes:

> *Schools today are institutions in which "learning" is taken to mean "being taught." You want people to learn? Teach them! You want them to learn more? Teach them more! And more![...] But learning is a process you do, not a process that is done to you![...] People go to school to learn. To learn, they must be left alone and given time. When they need help, it should be given[...] Sudbury Valley leaves its students be. Period. No maybes. No exceptions. We help if we can when we are asked. We never get in the* way.

Clearly, Greenberg is painting "teaching" as the evil which is to be replaced by "leaving students alone" and "giving them help when requested." In fact, I think that this "help-giving" can and in practice does take the form of "teaching," but this certainly isn't what Greenberg is writing. If he were, why wouldn't he simply write, "Teaching, when coerced, works poorly. Teaching, in the context of willing students, is an important part of education"?

Again I suggest that he is creating a false dichotomy between Statist-teaching and non-structured education. The third way is voluntarist-teaching, with no compulsory attendance, with willing students. Because Greenberg is trapped by this false dichotomy, he is unable theoretically to properly describe the actual activities of Sudbury Valley (which include "teaching").

Once we admit that teaching is (or could be) important to education, I merely take the step to suggest that, for many students, a more structured curriculum would be appropriate and helpful. Nothing coming out of the Sudbury literature comes to terms with this possibility.

I issue this challenge to Sudbury Valley: If curriculum is worthless, if "teaching" is worthless apart from classes constructed by the students, **THEN WHY IS SUDBURY VALLEY NEEDED IN THE FIRST PLACE??**

If the primary purpose of school is to "leave students be, period," then why do students even need to be at the school? It seems to me that they could be "left alone, period" much better if they simply stayed at home. Perhaps the Sudbury folk would answer, "The school creates a good environment for learning," to which I respond, "Who are you to decide what constitutes a good learning environment, if your goal is to leave students alone, period?" To this challenge, Sudbury can only respond, "We know what creates a good learning environment, and we believe students will choose to be here." But then I merely respond, "Many students will choose a more structured curriculum—one that will actually teach them a base of rudimentary knowledge—complete with structured classes and qualified teachers."

I do believe that, for the majority of students, exposure to a structured curriculum and teachers and lectures and homework will be much more valuable than the typical Sudbury experience. I mean, if students want play-time, I suspect they can find that at home or with friends; again, why do they need Sudbury for that? Let us not forget that students voluntarily hiked to (structured) school every day, "up hill both ways, through five feet deep snow," before compulsory attendance set in.

Kirk also responded to my post.

> *Sudbury has taken the *present* model of teaching and treated it as if it is the essence of teaching per se. I think this is wrong, and intellectually dangerous.*

Ari: I agree, and I'm curious: how do you see a danger in this?

> **Kirk:** *It is dangerous because it blinds them to the value of structured curriculum and designed, taught classes. This is harmful to most students' education. I also have to ask, since we both seem to question this theory, how do we respond to the claims of success Greenberg cites?*

Ari: First, I am somewhat skeptical of anecdotal evidence. I could find top students from just about any school. It is very easy to "massage" stories to fit one's case. I'm not doubting Greenberg, I'm just saying that I'm not convinced Sudbury turns out students of remarkably higher achievement than other institutions.

Second, as you note, children from good, caring, intellectually active families are going to grow up intelligent, no matter if they go to the worst school, the best school, or no school at all.

Third, the Statist schools in this country are so bad that children probably would learn more by not attending school at all, or by attending any OTHER school whatsoever, such as Sudbury. I'm not arguing that Sudbury is bad; I'm just arguing that there is probably a better system yet.

For instance, I was taught to read, by my mother (who taught others to read in her pre-school). I could hardly have "handled" written ideas without this knowledge.

> Kirk: *I think this could be considered a flawed example, since many children learn to read despite, without, or with adult teaching[...]*

Ari: Without *adult* teaching perhaps, but not without teaching of any sort. Kids could probably learn to read by watching Sesame Street, but they won't learn to read just by staring at a bunch of words. Sheldon Richman spoke today (in Denver) about slave children who learned to read from their free, schooled friends. But my point is not that children can't learn to read without adult teaching, but rather that they are much more likely to learn to read quickly and ably WITH adult teaching.

> Kirk: *I think we have to make room for different kinds of learning.*

Ari: With this I fully agree. Some students don't need school at all. Some, like Mozart, want only highly specialized instruction. My argument is that most students will not do their best at a place like Sudbury, that they would do much better in a more structured environment in which they agreed to participate. I think the main point we should keep in mind is that, in a free-market for education, children and their parents would be left free to choose and financially support the educational institution which fit *their* needs best. I.e., there would be room for Sudbury and for the most stringent academic prep schools.

—Ari

Mary: My beef with Dan's having co-opted the term democracy and turned it into a virtual trade name is that a private school that does not accept all comers but chooses them on the basis of ability to pay cannot call itself democratic, no matter how many votes kids get to be in on! Ask a kid in the South Bronx for his definition of democracy and your might get a very different answer. Besides, it restricts the definition of a "democratic school" to one that caters primarily to older kids.

Kids age two to six hardly ever find voting on school budgets relevant to their immediate concerns. What's democratic about limiting democracy to older kids only? Further, any adult worth his salt is capable of swaying a kid to his point of view if he uses the right bait. Kids are kids. Why else do so many of them fall for bribery by divorced parents who want them to prefer *them* over the estranged mate? This is more of a gimmick or power manoeuver to attract a certain class of parents who are influenced by such tokens.

In the long run, a kid will get from any school whatever his own particular brand of learning is if he can find the teacher he can invest himself in learning from to get it. I'm not agin "democracy" in schools, I just don't want it thrust in my face as a reason for defining a clone of a certain type of formulaic pedagogy, whether it be Waldorf, Montessori or Sudbury Valley. Hey, the school may be GREAT, but not because of the formula. To define schools in this fashion smacks of exclusivity, especially if the schools you endorse are all formula schools like your own.

[*Andy, who had been sick for a few days, came back into the discussion as follows*]:

To the members of the PSCS philosophy class:

Whew! Okay, I'm on my way back. I plan on trying to get caught up with the facilitating of this class over the next few days. Again, I thank you for your patience with me and appreciate your understanding. ... Some time ago, in response to my soapbox-style article I posted, Kirk wrote, "Do your students feel the same way? I can imagine young adolescents, who often find competence an important thing, could despise a school which put competence second to environmental trust and respect. Or does it work itself out? When you talk this way do they just roll their eyes and pick up a soldering gun?"

This is a series of tremendously insightful questions, Kirk. And for me to respond to them with utmost certainty would show me to be not only a tad bit naive, but perhaps very arrogant. I have a notion how the students feel. I feel pretty good about how the students feel. But I do not know entirely. Obviously, you'd need to ask them. Two are in this class—first as full participants but their silence has rendered them to lurker status. Perhaps at least one will speak up?? Nudge, nudge.

Anyway, when I get on my soapbox about education I think the students find it amusing. I think deep down they know that if I wasn't prone to get on my soapbox every now and then then PSCS would never have been created. I believe my passion for what I do is reassuring to them. Many of them had been turned off to education by the "system." They have their own "horror" stories to tell. To hear the "director" of a school sound like them is pretty cool, sometimes. Generally, they are pleased with PSCS (on several occasions I've had astounded parents call me to say their children are anxious to come to school—shouldn't this ALWAYS be the case?).

But I think you were really asking me if, like I, they feel that the environment is the most important thing. If that was your question, well, I don't have a very definitive answer for that, either. I think most students recognize that without a solid sense of community we really have nothing at PSCS. I'd say they don't always know how to help nurture that sense of community—that they might say how important it is in one minute but then act in a way that betrays it the next—but that is part of being young, I think. In response it is I (and the other staff members) who must set an example, who must try not to judge them, who must be loving and supportive as we set the foundation.

Regarding the competence component of your question, I have never thought of that, to be honest. Thinking about it now, my response is that we have SO many competent people facilitating activities that I don't think competence has ever been questioned, which is perhaps why I've never considered the question. I know (at least I like to believe) that the students see me as very competent. I have no doubt they see the entire staff as competent. So, the best I can say to this is I don't believe anyone thinks competency is being sacrificed for the sake of a supportive environment.

Going further, I don't for a second believe this is an "either/or" situation (EITHER we help students gain competency OR we have them in a supportive environment). I will say that I don't think competency matters much if you don't have a solid educational environment (that statement could stir up some controversy!). I don't think academics are all that important if a person is unhappy. I don't think gunning for high grades is important if an individual cannot relate to other people. You see, I put social and emotional development before academics; in other words, I don't believe a 4.0 grade point average is what creates long-lasting high self-esteem.

What I do believe is that the solid educational environment must come first. Help support solid, happy people. Solid, happy people have a driving need to be competent. They won't settle for anything less. So I guess what I'm saying is if PSCS is successful at creating the right environment we are answering the competency question (that the right environment is the fertile soil for competency to grow). Whew.

About students rolling their eyes—of course they do. They do it with sarcasm sometimes, other times it's like, "There goes Andy again." But I think we all see it as part of the program—my role is to preach a bit about why we do what we do at PSCS. Their role is to poke me in the ribs a bit while I do it. When I'm at my best, I make fun of myself, too. But even when we're laughing (laughing at me!) everyone knows I'm serious about education.

Kirk, I bet you never thought you'd get such an answer. To Ari, I've loved reading your criticisms of Sudbury Valley. I've found your postings, and Mary's lengthy description of her relationship with Dan Greenberg to be liberating. For that I thank you. I think I've come out, a bit, of the SVS shadow because of it.

I am one of those who has been intimidated by Sudbury Valley. Only one time did this happen in a direct, personal kind of way. But I've done it to myself when I think how different PSCS is from SVS, and the fact they've been around for so long (my thinking: by now they must have perfected this style of education—how dare I try to do it differently?). The thing for me is not all of it rang true. I knew intuitively that I had to put my stamp, my individuality, on PSCS or it wouldn't last. I continue to find inspiration from Sudbury Valley. I will forever feel a deep sense of gratitude for their existence. But I'm finding I don't need to explain away every difference between us and them. We are who WE are.

Ari wrote, "I think the main point we should keep in mind is that, in a free-market for education, children and their parents would be left free to choose and financially support the educational institution which fit *their* needs best. I.e., there would be room for Sudbury and for the most stringent academic prep schools."

This certainly opens up a political can of worms in our discussions. I have mixed feelings on this subject, which may come as a surprise. As a parent I find it ridiculous that my wife and I will likely pay between $6,000 and $9,000 to send our oldest daughter to the kindergarten of our choice next fall. Especially when one factors in that our taxes help pay for the public schools.

This is especially hard because we don't make a lot of money running PSCS and such a tuition expense hits us hard—right now it's impacting what size house we can afford and its location (we want to buy a house near the heart of Seattle but aren't able to afford it—although we could if we sent our daughter to public school—how's that for hitting you where you live?).

On the other hand, what is the responsibility of our government to provide a decent education for its citizens (for a second I want to suspend what one terms "decent")? To privatize all of education, I fear, would REALLY separate the haves from the have-nots. People with money will still be the only ones who can afford certain schools—as I've interpreted a voucher system it would, at best, put a few thousand dollars in the hands of parents. That's still not enough for most private schools, at least around here. What would be left would be a public school system that would be decimated even more. And this doesn't even factor in that some families aren't going to be able to transport their children across town to the better school. They'll be forced to take whatever option is left in their neighborhoods.

I guess my concern over a completely free-market in education is that I think those with privilege will get more choices. Those without privilege will get less. Within this point we must remember what Mary said so well, "We Americans are becoming utterly unwilling and unable to tolerate individual differences, regardless of the lip service we pay to 'multi-culturalism.'" So much of the education/political debate (it's how I began my take on this thread) is about how it impacts ME, my kids. Not that it might mean that some hungry, impoverished child from across town might get hungrier and more impoverished because the public schools have been privatized. Not that we might be isolating people in more pockets (by race, income, class, whatever).

Then, of course, there is the simple fact that the current system of education is in such a mess that it might just take this kind of shake-up, with several years of sacrificing some children, to allow for something better to emerge. Isn't THAT a sad thought?! With that last thought in mind, I turn to this statement from Ari, "I do believe that, for the majority of students, exposure to a structured curriculum and teachers and lectures and homework will be much more valuable than the typical Sudbury experience."

I disagree. In general, I think students would be better off left alone than be force-fed (IF that's what you meant) a structured curriculum. My simple point is this, students should never have a structured curriculum unless they have requested it. As an example, my 4 year-old can not get enough of reading and writing right now. She is REQUESTING it. I wouldn't say that we are responding with a structured curriculum but we are (constantly, it seems) spelling words for her, helping her draw letters (K's are the toughest), reading to her. To me, the equivalent of that is all I want to do for PSCS students—I've often told parents that what I want PSCS to do is exactly what they all did intuitively when their children were young. ...

—Andy

Betsy *(Betsy Herbert, Santa Cruz, CA, during their wild storms last winter!)*:

I'm Baaack! Delighted to be baack with y'all, at least for the time being, while the electrical wires are up and humming. We are being blasted with storms, mudslides, high winds, fallen trees, downed power poles and lines, closed roads. No damage to us personally (as yet), and personally, I am enjoying living in what a friend calls "the possibility of possibilities," moment to moment.

In response to your long note, Andy, you wrote:

> *What I do believe is that the solid educational environment must come first. Help support solid, happy people. Solid, happy people have a driving need to be competent. They won't settle for anything less.*

This has certainly been my experience in the educational setting in which I work. I see teenagers and young adults molding their lives from their dreams, passions and interests because no one has told them that this is not possible. Their academic skills are a tool among other tools for life, and not the sole measure of their competence. They do not see adults as judgmental and unapproachable, and they do not see anyone younger than them as "babies."

About the acquisition of basic academic skills, I am totally confident that any curious, motivated student will find a way to get a measure of these skills; they are part of our culture. I know a young man who learned to ready practically instantly when it came time to take his written test for a driver's license (he probably had known how to read for a while, but was not interested in demonstrating his skill).

We see, in our homeschooling community, students who might profit from what we call a "classical education." It's hard to know whether that's just a romantic notion that we teachers foster. Is it possible to marry an image of alternative schooling and dusty libraries full of Knowledge?

This brings up a memory of being a Goddard student in the 50's when the Goddard library was very small; once a month a bunch of us would drive to Dartmouth and putter around in its huge old library for a day, coming home with armloads of books so that we could adequately write papers....I also remember teaching improvisational dance at Anna Halprin's school in SF in the 60's and occasionally throwing in some ballet technique to balance the wild thrashings about. Balance, balance.

On the issue of public/private education, Andy wrote:

> *I have mixed feelings on this subject, which may come as a surprise. As a parent I find it ridiculous that my wife and I will likely pay between $6,000 and $9,000 to send our oldest daughter to the kindergarten of our choice next fall. Especially when one factors in that our taxes help pay for the public schools.*

I struggled with this as a parent and am deeply involved with the implications of this as an educator. When we were homeschooling parents, we formed a community of families who provided support and activity which was vital for all of us; it worked until the children reached the age of nine. Then what we wanted was a part-time school arrangement, some way the kids could interface with a larger community but keep the richness and groundedness of family life. Not one private school in our county would hear of part-time participation, and the public schools wouldn't condone it either. "They might miss something" was the common argument. That was exactly how we felt about too much time away from home—they (we) might miss something.

We invented some creative covert ways around this, but that's for another writing. Then we discovered that the state-mandated Independent Studies option could provide a perfect umbrella for homeschoolers and year after year a small band of us made an appearance before the School Board to plead our case. "Show us twenty-eight students who could form a "homeschool" class, and we'll talk business", said the School Board. And so the half-dozen families continued to do what we did, and the school district continued not to realize our ADA (AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE—do they call it the same in Washington?).

After a while, it became apparent that there was lots of ADA out there that school districts weren't getting while folks were busy pioneering the homeschooling movement. To condense a long tale into a few words, I live and work in an area where there now is tremendous public support (part-time school, community-based classes, etc.) for home-based education. The school district for the San Lorenzo Valley (4 towns in the Santa Cruz mountains) has 5 homeschool programs, all umbrella-ed by a public Charter School.

My revolutionary contribution to this has been to found and run South Street Centre, registered as a private school, but largely funded by the school district as a "schoolhouse" for homeschoolers. The Centre is homelike and un-institutional, making a bridge between home and community, private and public education. I love the interface with the school district; it keeps me "amped up" in a way I would avoid if the Centre were completely private (we also run programs that are private tuition), and the public subsidy makes our activities available to folks who could otherwise not afford it.

Andy, again:

> *As an example, my 4 year-old can not get enough of reading and writing right now. She is REQUESTING it. I wouldn't say that we are responding with a structured curriculum but we are (constantly, it seems) spelling words for her, helping her draw letters (K's are the toughest), reading to her. To me, the equivalent of that is all I want to do for PSCS students -- I've often told parents that what I want PSCS to do is exactly what they all did intuitively when their children were young.*

Yes, yes, yes, yes......Andy, you and Melinda stand the chance to really go far with your vision for education by really believing, and believing in what you said here.

Ahhh, the sound of rain on the roof; I'd better stop writing and send this while I can. I love this class; will send my reflective response in the next email.

—Betsy

LETTERS:

Dear Mary,

For the past decade and more *ΣKOΛE* has played a major role and filled an important need in the alternative education movement. I can't imagine *ΣKOΛE* without Mary Leue, so I hope your effort to spread responsibility succeeds. I can understand your situation because at 75, I'm not far behind you and have not yet solved the problem of succession.

Here our situation is complicated by the extreme difficulty we've had, as an alternative institution in Japan, in trying to stay solvent. Nat [Needle] is another matter; from our vantage point, he is a young man, so I suspect he may be a prospect. At any rate, I will print out your letter and fax it to him. (Nat has just got a computer, but he is not yet set up with email. He may have told you that he is now teaching at other schools not too near this Center, so I don't see him often).

Thanks again for all your support and encouragement over the years.

Sincerely,
Dayle [Bethel]

In the Summer 1997 issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ we published the first half of this interview by John Potter with his son Akira-chan about the latter's experiences as a boarding student at Kinokuni Children's Village. John writes that he has a new job teaching at the new campus for the Faculty of Social Welfare, Kogakkan University in Nabari.

KINOKUNI CHILDREN'S VILLAGE: A CHILD'S VIEW (Part 2)

by John and Akira-chan Potter

PROGRESS REPORT:

Kinokuni Children's Village opened in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan in 1992 as a 'modified model of Summerhill School' and was founded by a group led by former Education Professor and A.S. Neill translator, Shinichiro Hori. The first school of its kind to be granted recognition by the Japanese Ministry of Education, it began as a boarding school for children aged 6-12 based on a combined philosophy of the ideas of Neill, John Dewey, and Hori

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himself. At the time of my first interviews with Akira (my son), in March 1997, Kinokuni had already expanded to include a junior high school department and had grown to 140 children and 18 staff. In 1998 two further developments of importance took place. A high school department was added to Kinokuni, comprising at present just eight children. This necessitated the appointment of some additional staff and these included Hori's son, Hisashi Hori, who joined the school to teach English. Akiko Maruyama, daughter of Hiroko Maruyama, one of the original founders of Kinokuni, also started work at the school. Akiko herself spent some time as a student at Kilquhanity House School in Scotland, another school inspired by Neill's example.

The other major development has been the opening of a second school some distance from Kinokuni, in the rural Fukui Prefecture. The Fukui school is known as Katsuyama Children's Village (Katsuyama Kodomo no Mura). About 20 children began at the school which is based in the old primary school building which closed down about two years ago. The Katsuyama City council allowed Shinichiro Hori to take over the building for use as a school because they were reported to be in agreement with his philosophy. Hori goes there to help out twice a week and spends the rest of the time at Kinokuni in Wakayama.

In addition, another book has recently been published of Hori's writings together with those of other people connected with Kinokuni. This includes several pieces by the children. Also, at Kinokuni the idea of studying 'basic skills' as a separate entity has been dropped and these are now included as part of the project work which is the main focus of the school's activity.

The following interview took place in April 1998 just after Akira had begun his third year at the school. He had also just moved with his parents from the big city of Kobe to the smaller Nabari (population 80,000) in Mie Prefecture owing to his father's change of job. Akira's new home is on the edge of a residential development in the south of Nabari. It is surrounded by mountains and close to a dam and a large lake and so provides a rather more natural environment than the urban Kobe. The distance from Nabari to the school is not greatly different than that from Kobe to Kinokuni. Akira still attends as a weekly boarder, going to the school on Monday mornings and returning home for the weekend on Friday afternoon. His mother takes him by train as far as Osaka where he meets up with other children travelling to Kinokuni. She (or occasionally his father) then meets him at the station in Osaka on Fridays for the return trip home.

At the time of this interview Akira was eight years old. He will be nine on 29th July 1998. His mother adds that there have been times in this third year when he has not always been as happy as the picture he presents and his moods have varied from week to week. Settling in to the new home has been a challenge for all the family and so this may have contributed to some occasional unsettling effects. However, at present Akira seems to be enjoying life both at home and at school, which is the best that could be hoped for.

Akira now reads and writes quite well in Japanese and speaks Japanese both at school and at home with his mother. He reads and writes very little in English but is happy to speak English with his father at home. This interview was conducted entirely in English.

Akira insists that his photo be included with this interview as his father foolishly forgot to enclose one with the earlier article.

Interview #2 with Akira, 26th April, 1998.

Q. What do you like to do best at Kinokuni?
A. Going to somewhere, and playing football.
Going on a trip?
Yes.
Which project did you do last year?
Umaimon. Making lots of things to eat.
What kind of things did you make to eat. Do you remember anything?
Takoyaki and hamburger, and scrambled egg and yakitori. Sushi.
And were the children you did the project with all different ages?
Yes, lots of different ages.
Anybody in your room?
All the boys in my room did the same project. And me.
How about this year. What project are you doing this year?
Tanken club. It's...you go to lots of places. And you can see. And you can build, some sort of places we built.
So that's like exploration project isn't it?
Yes.
The very first year you were at Kinokuni which project did you do?
Komuten.
Yes, that's right. Workshop.
Which project do you think is the most interesting?
I went to somewhere in Hikotani and took lots of grasses. Like, lots of grass that you can eat.

So do you think last year or this year is better?

This year.

Do you think you're going to like it better than the food one?

I think!

When you first started at Kinokuni, that was over two years ago wasn't it? Do you think that you like being there now more or did you like it better when you first started?

When I first started it was very good, but now I've just started this year, so I don't know.

When you first went to Kinokuni when you were six years old, you were a bit lonely at first, weren't you, because you were away from home. How about now? Do you feel like that now?

No. I like it.

So don't you ever feel a bit lonely?

Never.

You don't miss Mummy or Daddy?

No. But sometimes.

Now you've moved from Kobe, haven't you, to Nabari?

Yes.

Do you ever feel that you'd like to change schools too? Because there's a school right down the road here, or do you ever feel you'd like to stay at home and have no school, or go to Summerhill?

Kinokuni, I think.

That's best, is it?

Yes.

I see. Who is your housemother now at Kinokuni?

It's Hideko.

Is she nice?

Yes.

How about the teachers. Everything you do is project, isn't it?

Yes.

So who does that with you?

Matsumoto-chan and Kinbara-san. A man and a woman.

Do you always go to the project?

Yes.

What if you didn't go. Is that OK?

Yes.

What about bedtimes. What time do you go to bed now? Is it different from the first or second year?

It's not different. When you go inside the bed it's nine o'clock and when you have to turn the lights off it's nine thirty.

Who decided the bedtimes? Did you do it?

No. That time I was not there, I think.

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So was it in the meeting?
Yes.
You have a big school now, haven't you?
Yes.
Because there's a high school and a junior high school now. Do the young children and the older ones at the high school ever play together?
Yes, they sometimes play football together and they sometimes go inside the bike.
Hori was telling me that in the first year, some of the ones who went up to the junior high school thought they were very, very clever and they didn't much want to play with the younger ones. Is it not like that now?
Not so much. Sometimes one of the high school boys plays with us with Lego.
And do the boys and girls play with each other, or do boys only play with boys and girls only play with girls?
Sometimes.
Sometimes mixed up, is it?
Yes.
I see. Now you come from Japan and England. You have two nationalities, haven't you?
Yes.
You're double. So what about the children. Do they ever say anything about that to you?
No.
They know you can speak English, do they?
Yes.
So they don't ever say anything nice or nasty or interesting about that?
No.
Do you remember a year ago, you said to me sometimes the children say things like "What's this mean in English?" Do they ever ask you that now?
No.
Now what about the meeting. Is it any better or worse?
A little bit better. We talk about a lot of things.
If you have a problem can you bring it up at the meeting?
Yes, of course.
And would they say the person's name when they talk about it?
Yes.
Have you ever talked in the meeting?
Just once, a long time ago.
What kind of things do you decide together at the meetings?

Sometimes, somebody scratched the wall in the dormitory. And another time some boy took another boy's thing.

They talk about that do they? And does it usually make everything OK again once you've talked about it?

Yes.

Are there still meetings in the dormitory as well as the big one in the school?

Sometimes there's no meeting but sometimes they have a lot of meetings.

Do you ever vote on something? You know, you put your hand up to say if you agree or disagree?

Yes.

This is a difficult question. Do you think that since you began at Kinokuni up until now, the school has changed at all?

It's more good and it's fun, and I like it more.

Is there anything you dislike about Kinokuni?

Nothing. Nothing at all.

So you don't ever think "Oh, I'll stop after half-term"?

No. Never.

I asked you this last year but I'll ask you again. How about a typical day at Kinokuni, from the time you wake up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night?

When I wake up, first I will wake up another boy and then I'll get dressed.

And then you go somewhere for breakfast?

Yes, when the time comes. Then you can play a bit and then you go to the school. We do project. Then lunch is in the hall. And when it comes to three o'clock you go back in the dormitory and you have a dinner in the dormitory. They have a table. And you can play a little bit and see television. And after that sometimes the dormitory people give us a cookie or something. And after that we can get dressed up in pajamas. And we can play a little bit and go inside the bed and read or something. When it comes to nine-thirty you turn off the lights.

What's the food like? Is it any good?

Yes. But if you don't want to eat this, you don't have to take it.

I see. Now there's just one more question and it's about your move. Because you changed from living in Kobe to living in Nabari, which is a long way from Kobe. It takes you a little bit longer doesn't it, to go to Kinokuni?

Yes.

How do you feel about moving to the new place? Do you mind?

I mind, but I like the house and things but sometimes when I go inside the train I sleep. It takes a little bit longer.

There's one other child from Nabari isn't there, who goes to Kinokuni?
Yes.
Do you know him?
Yes, I know him.
Is he older than you?
Yes, but I know him.
What's his name?
Kobayashi Akinori.
So you'd like to carry on going from Nabari to Kinokuni, would you?
Yes.
You don't want to change?
No.
Right up until you're a big boy?
Yes, high school too,I'd like to go to.
When you finally leave high school what do you think you'll do?
I will go to the daigaku (university), I think, and after the daigaku I will be a footballer or a chef.
That's what you'd like to do, is it?
Yes.
Would you like to go to Kinokuni high school or another one?
Kinokuni high school is better, I think.
Is there anything else you want to say about Kinokuni?
Yes, first my bed was in the centre but now it's in a different place. And one time my friend came to stay and then I went to his house to stay. My friend called Shinsuke.
Well, thank you very much, Akira.
Yes, you're welcome.

Dean Dayle Bethel

WHY ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION?

An interview with Professor Dayle Bethel

From the Japan Environmental Exchange *for March, 1998:*

Few people have been more concerned about the role of education in our society or spent more years in seeking to change that role than Dr. Dayle Bethel, dean of The International University (TIU) Learning Center in Kyoto, Japan. So, when JEE (Japan Environmental Exchange) decided to focus its March issue on alternative education, we asked Dr. Bethel to explain for us just what alternative education means to him. Following are his responses to questions put to him by JEE*'s associate editor, Maura Hurley.*

I. Background:

Hurley: Dr. Bethel, you have been involved for many years in what is called "alternative education." Would you explain what this means? Just what is alternative education?

Bethel: I am frequently asked that question. It is a rather big topic, but I have found that the best way of getting directly to the heart of alternative education is to ask a question of the questioner. So I ask, Are you satisfied with the world as you know it today? Are you satisfied with a world whose rivers and oceans are becoming so polluted that fish can no longer live in them? Are you satisfied with a world where the air in many places is so dirty it is dangerous to breathe? Are you satisfied with a world in which there is seemingly no end to the corruption of business and political leaders? Are you satisfied with a world which robs its children and young people of their youth by subjecting them to examination hell, a world which drives many of its young people to a cruel and sometimes fatal kind of bullying, to suicide, to violence against each other and against their parents? The list could go on and on. Are you satisfied with such a world?

Now, of course, no rational person could be satisfied with these inhumane conditions. But if you are not satisfied, if you think the world should be different from what it is, what should you do, what can you do, to make things different and more satisfying? You cannot really understand alternative education unless you recognize these realities and the need for changing them.

H: Do you mean that education can or should change society? What does education have to do with the unsatisfying conditions in our society which you mentioned?

B: It would be too simplistic to say that education (and I assume you mean schools) can change society. It overlooks the deep interrelationships between all aspects of a society.

But many people do not see any relationship between education and the life-destroying conditions I described above. The truth is that education is one of the main factors creating these conditions and in preventing change and improvement from occurring. There are two ways in which our system of education contributes to these conditions. First of all, our society is like it is because of the values it is built on. (Every society is built on values). Some of the values underlying industrial societies, such as Japan and the United States, are flawed and damaging to personal and social health. These false values lead inevitably to a sick society. Our present education was created by society in the past to serve these false values. Education and schools prevent change in one way by supporting and perpetuating the false values, behavior patterns and social structures which are creating the unsatisfactory conditions.

Our present education prevents change, secondly, by the way it affects each generation of children and young people. I'll try to avoid complex explanations and technical language and just say that contemporary education disregards and is contrary to the developmental needs of childhood.

H: But how can this be? Most teachers I know, for example, would deny that what they are doing in their classrooms causes the terrible conditions of our society or that schools keep society from changing.

B: You must understand that every child, in infancy and early childhood, is a many-sided bundle of potential. For example, a healthy, happy child capable of growing into a healthy, happy adult has these characteristics (among others): endless curiosity, a sense of wonder, a desire to make and create something, it wants to find out how things work, it wants to know why, it has memory and memorizing ability, it has a sense of rhythm and movement, it is interested in many things and deeply interested in a few things, it needs community and wants to contribute to its community.

Our present education does not help the child develop all of these many sides. In fact, the values of our present society say that only one of these sides is really important and necessary. That side is the ability to memorize and remember facts. Because of deep belief in this value, our schools spend nearly all of their time and resources in trying to develop this side of each child. Naturally, then, children, and the adults they become, tend to be one-sided people.

H: If what you say is true, we are failing our children, aren't we?

B: Yes, we are. We have failed to understand that in order for a child to develop all of her many sides, she must grow up as an integral part of two systems, two systems on which her whole life depends. These are nature, the natural system in the area where she is, and her family and community, her social system. A child who grows up as an integral part of these two vital systems, contributing to them and receiving both physical and spiritual nourishment from them, will appreciate those systems. She will feel responsibility for those systems and will love them and want to protect them.

But what do we do? We take children away from both of these systems and shut them up in a school room for six or more hours every day during the most impressionable and formative years of their lives. We deny them the privilege, and the opportunity to contribute to either system in any meaningful way. We do not let them assume any responsibility within either system. In most cases children today do no work of any kind during their growing years, except perhaps part-time jobs for pocket money. And that is not what I mean by work.

H: But again, most people I know would say this is natural and normal and the way it should be. Are you saying there is something wrong with this system?

B: Not only is this treatment of children unnatural, it is a violation of the basic nature of children. It disregards the developmental needs of childhood.

H: Surely you do not mean that children should not go to school, do you?

B: No, what I am saying is that 1) schools must be based on sound principles of human learning and an understanding of the developmental needs of children, 2) schooling must not be confused with learning, and 3) children must be integral parts of their natural and social life support systems during their growth years. An effective school would be organized in such a way as to make this possible. The problem is that very few schools in existence today can qualify in these three respects.

And what we have to recognize is that all of us have been influenced by this one-sided kind of education and all of us are in some degree one-sided people. Such people tend to support the false values and flawed social structures which produced them. The result, after many years, is that a society gets worse and worse because they cannot or will not solve the problems their one-sidedness creates. Sooner or later such a society will destroy itself unless it changes its values and way of living.

H: So in one sense, alternative education can be understood as one attempt within our society to change values and lifestyles in order that all of us can have a better life and live in a better society.

B: That is one way to describe the purpose of alternative education.

II. Principles of Alternative Education:

H: If we really want a good society, then, nothing could be more important than developing schools capable of helping children grow into healthy, whole, many-sided persons. What would such a school be like?

B: Education, as I indicated earlier, is a key factor in the development both of healthy, happy persons and of good societies. A review of the ideas and proposals of leading alternative educators, both now and in the past, suggests that good schools must be firmly grounded on several basic principles. Here are six principles which I believe are indispensable if we want children to be healthy, happy, and creative:

1. The earth is perceived as a unity and all phenomena on the earth, including human beings, are perceived as interconnected and interdependent.

2. Education is organized in terms of a specific place, a "community" or a "region," that is, a localized environment, which the student can experience directly.

3. The curriculum consists of the interconnected phenomena making up the natural and social systems within that local environment. Books and other second-hand materials can be used in support of the direct, personal experiencing of natural phenomena by the learner, but never in place of direct experience.

4. Direct experience learning implies and requires that learning take place in the midst of the phenomena, natural and social, which constitute the environment. Classrooms are useful for some kinds of skill development and as gathering places for planning, reflecting on the things observed and studied in their natural setting, comparing perceptions and understandings of phenomena with fellow-learners (other students, teacher-guides, other adults, including parents) and with books and other second-hand material.

5. Learning is never imposed, but grows out of each learner's own curiosity, questions, and explorations stemming from personal interests and motivation. In other words,

learning must be a process of elicitation, of drawing out the unique potential within each student, and not, as in today's schools, inculcation or putting in.

6. Responsibility for guiding children and young people in this community-based learning interaction is shared by parents, educators (teacher-guides), older students, and other adults in their varied community roles and specialties.

Included in such a guided program of direct learning would be study and research projects of every variety developed through cooperation between the child, the parents, and a teacher-guide. But included, too, would be the opportunity for each child to engage in some meaningful work in an apprenticeship or part-time work with a cooperating business in the community, an artist, a professional person, the community government, on a farm, etc.

H: Well, one thing seems clear. A school based on the six guidelines you listed would be greatly different from the schools I attended.

B: True. The schools you went to and the schools I went to had one main purpose. That purpose was to fill our heads with thousands of facts and then test us to see how many of those facts stayed in our heads.

III. Practical Application:

H: It's hard for me to imagine the kind of school you are talking about. Could you describe such a school from the standpoint of a real child, let's say a six-year-old little girl. I'll call her Kyoko.

B: All right. Let's play with that idea. But first you will need to put aside your earlier ideas about schools and about learning.

Let's imagine that Kyoko and her parents live in a neighborhood of perhaps 3,000 people, either in a rural area or in a natural neighborhood within a large city.

You say Kyoko is now six years old, but we must pick up the story of her education much earlier when she is just a small infant.

Kyoko has wise parents. They understand that as her parents they have two all-important responsibilities toward her. The first responsibility is to help her begin to discover and appreciate the unique, irreplaceable potential genius with which she was born. Their second responsibility is to help Kyoko become a valued, responsible participant in both parts of the world around her, the world of nature and the world of people.

H: Dr. Bethel, I am not a parent, but right now I don't have any idea how to begin to help Kyoko in these two ways. Can you explain just what Kyoko's parents will do?
B: It's not so difficult. Let me give some simple examples.

> As she grows older, Kyoko will give her parents two clues about her inner potential. Those clues are her attention span and her willingness to endure pain or hardship.
>
> As Kyoko grows, her parents will notice that she spends a long time doing certain kinds of activity, whereas she becomes bored quickly by some other activities and soon abandons them. Those long periods of attention and concentration are very likely related to some aspect of Kyoko's inner potential. Likewise, she will continue this latter kind of activity even in the face of pain and difficulty.
>
> Similarly, Kyoko's behavior will provide clues about the parents' second responsibility to their daughter. As she begins to walk and move around and communicate, she will be endlessly curious about everything in her two worlds, the world of nature and the world of people.
>
> All her parents need to do is be sensitive to Kyoko's first tender efforts to learn about these worlds and become a part of them. They will take time, for example, to examine a bug with her, or a bird. They will take her for walks and enjoy with her the exciting new things she will point to and stop to admire. As she grows older, they may take her to a library to look at books with her about bugs, birds, or whatever else strikes her fancy.

H: Now, that is fine, and I am sure it is important. But, speaking practically, what if Kyoko's parents are too busy to spend all this time with her?
B: Every family has to solve its own problems. Let me just say that in every case, parents who love their child will take enough time to get intimately acquainted with that child. They may enlist the help of grandparents, older brothers or sisters, or perhaps close neighbors, under their guidance. Even good baby sitters or understanding nursery school teachers can help parents carry out their responsibility to their child. The main thing is that the child have parents (or parent substitutes) who understand and accept their responsibility for the child's learning through integration into its two worlds of nature and of people. This parental responsibility extends from infancy to adulthood.

Let me say one further thing about Kyoko's participation in her family, her first social world. Very soon after she begins to walk and communicate, she will be deeply motivated to model the behavior of the adults around her who are important to her. She will want to help. She will want to do the things those adults do. She will want to be recognized as an important member of her social world.

Here is where so many parents fail. At some point, Kyoko will want to help set the table, pour the milk, stir the cookies, or whatever. How many busy, tired, impatient mothers might respond with: "Kyoko, you can't do that, you'll break it." Or "No, you are too little, go into the other room and play." "No, this is for big people." How many of these precious, once-in-a-life time opportunities are missed!

Kyoko's parents, because they are wise and understanding, will take time to let Kyoko help, no matter how busy they are. And Kyoko will have taken her first, small steps toward confident, responsible participation in her social world.

IV. Education for Creative Living

H: When I asked you to explain about alternative education, I expected you to tell me about a different kind of school. Instead, you have been talking about a different kind of learning.

B: Precisely. Alternative education is not really about schools. It is about learning and the way we live and the way we relate to each other and to the world around us.

In the traditional perception, a child's education is perceived to begin when she enters elementary school or, perhaps, kindergarten, and to be the responsibility of teachers and educational administrators. In the alternative perception, her education begins at birth and is the responsibility of her parents until she is old enough to begin assuming that responsibility herself. At that point, her parents gradually yield the responsibility to her.

H: Does this suggest a need to pay more attention to education for parents?

B: Yes, it certainly does, and much needs to be said about that.

But let's go back to Kyoko's situation for a moment. Her learning as she enters childhood, and later as she enters adolescence, will essentially be an extension and expansion of the discovery and exploratory studies and activities she has been engaged in under the general guidance of her parents.

There will be two differences: First, her exploratory activities will expand to include the larger immediate community in which she lives, and later the region of which her local community is a part. In time, her learning interests and activities will become planetary, providing the early stages of her learning have been well grounded.

The second difference is that other persons will now begin sharing with her parents the responsibility of guiding her learning. Some of these other persons will be associated with a school-community resource center. At this school-center there are teacher-guides, librarians, counselors, and others who can help Kyoko, in close coordination with her parents, to develop a program of learning, exploration, and community participation. Her program will develop naturally out of what she and others have learned about her interests and inner potential.

H: Earlier you mentioned apprenticeships and part-time work experience. How will these fit into Kyoko's life and learning programs as she is growing up?

B: This is a crucial point.

The opportunity to participate in the life of her community through sharing in its productive work will do two things for Kyoko. First, it will enable her to feel and be an important functioning part of the natural world and understand its interrelationships. Second, it will give her opportunity to gain further understanding of and confidence in her inner self.

The nature of Kyoko's work experiences will change as she grows older. At first, it will consist of sharing in the necessary work of her family. Remember, her parents wisely permitted her to begin helping with real jobs when she was very small, setting the table, helping with cooking, cleaning, taking out the trash, etc. She has grown up understanding that everyone in her family community shares in doing the work necessary to the family's welfare and survival.

In due time, in cooperation with teacher-guides and counselors at the community school-center, Kyoko's learning program will include small work responsibilities suited to her age and strength. Perhaps it will be a few hours each week helping in her family's business, or helping and learning about one of the various businesses in the community under the tutelage of and in cooperation with the owner, manager, or an employee. Or perhaps it will be a few hours in a lawyer's office, a doctor, an artist, or many others.

During Kyoko's teen-age years, she will advance to more structured apprenticeships or part-time work which provide further opportunity for her to explore and contribute to the world she is a part of. It will also help her develop deeper understanding of herself. The main thing to understand is that all of this work experience is a part of Kyoko's personal learning program. And now, at this age, she herself begins to accept responsibility in developing that program in cooperation with her parents, her teacher-guides, and others concerned with her welfare.

H: I'm sure that in your work at The International University Center you have guided the programs of many older students over the years.

B: Yes, I have worked closely with nearly one hundred students at the Center over the past twenty years. I think I learned as much from them as they learned from me. I suppose that is why I have found guiding students in direct learning so challenging. I can think of two students whose learning programs were particularly interesting. First, however, let me refer again to the principles of alternative education which I mentioned earlier. In terms of content, each student's program of studies has two dimensions. The first dimension involves discovery of her own inner nature and potential by means of identifying those activities and aspects of reality in which she finds intrinsic satisfaction.

The second dimension is the student's personal community. It is directly from that community that the student selects the content of her curriculum. The scope of one's community varies with age and level of growth. The community of a two-year-old is limited to her family. During the elementary and junior high school years, the scope of community expands to include immediate community and region. At the high school and university levels, the student's community is still firmly grounded in the local community, but now the focus is on relationships with the planet and cosmos of which she and her local community are interdependent parts. I think you will see how this works in practice in the programs of the two students I mentioned.

One of the students was an American student who was deeply interested in architecture and structural design. He spent a year-and-a-half of a four-year university program in Japan. Our faculty helped him design a study of architecture within the context of

Japanese history, religion, and modernization. As a part of this study, he traveled from Kyushu to Hokkaido and took more than 1,500 slides of temples, homes, schools, and other structures portraying a variety of architectural designs. Since graduating with BA and MA degrees in architecture, he has worked as an architect in the United States, Kenya, England, France, Italy, and recently in Japan where he was a member of the design team for the Kansai International Airport.

The other student is a young man who is currently enrolled in a program with the Center. Why don't we let him speak for himself?

> **Motoshi Suzuki:** I spent fourteen years of my life going to public schools. In elementary school and junior high school, I never had a chance to think about what I could do or what I really wanted to do. My main concern during those years was to avoid being scolded by the teachers. I had no interest in what they wanted me to learn, but I tried to absorb it so I could pass the tests they gave. In high school I became fed up with this one-way, robot-making kind of education and grew to hate it.
>
> I had a dream at that time of becoming a journalist, and I looked forward to university study. I imagined that in the university I would really be able to study journalism and other meaningful and interesting things. With this hope, I entered a university in Tokyo, but I soon was bitterly disappointed. The university turned out to be just a more advanced, one-way educational system, so I resorted to playing around and marking time like the students around me.
>
> After two years of this kind of university life, I realized I was wasting my time. I still dreamed of being a journalist, so I consulted with my uncle. He told me about an alternative university center which he had heard about from teachers at Nonami Children's Village near his home in Nagoya. So, I transferred to the TIU Center for my last two years of university work.
>
> At first, studying at TIU was very difficult for me. I had never before had to be responsible for my own learning. In all my previous life someone had always told me what to study, when to study, and where to study it. My first term at TIU Osaka was a disaster, but after a while I realized that I had only myself to blame. Slowly, encouraged by the Center faculty, I began to gain confidence in my own ability to organize my learning and my life.

This past year has been the most exciting and challenging period of my life. For the first time, I am where I want to be, doing what I want to do. My interests in journalism have led me to studies of discrimination, the destruction of Southeast Asia's rain forests, international trade, sustainable development, society and personality growth and many other things I want to learn about.

Much of my learning program involves participation in organizations in the community and meeting many different kinds of people. For example, I serve as an assistant to the leader of an Amnesty International chapter; last year I helped plan and attended an international conference on alternative education in Hawaii; at present I am helping prepare for a conference on sustainable development which will be held in Kobe. I am also editing a newsletter on environmental education. Just now I am writing to the Third World Network office in Malaysia to inquire about Third World people's thinking about free trade and the recent GATT negotiations (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). In short, I am not only studying about journalism; I am doing journalism as a part of the process of learning about it.

H: These examples help me better understand what you mean by the natural world and the student's community being the source of the curriculum. Is this possible with children as well as with older students like these you have worked with at your Center?

B: Yes, it certainly is. In fact, it is even more important that a major part of the learning programs of children involve direct experience with natural systems. There are two references which I have found particularly helpful. One is a marvelous little book by Rachel Carson entitled *The Sense of Wonder* (Harper and Row, 1956). It is especially useful for parents of young children. For parents and for teachers of children of all ages the "home environment" curriculum proposed many years ago by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a Japanese educator, is an excellent source of ideas for direct learning. (*Education for Creative Living*, Iowa State University Press, 1989).

I would recommend, also, a similar proposal by an American educator, Lewis Mumford. He proposed what he called a "regional survey" as a framework for direct learning of natural systems. Descriptions of the regional survey can be found in a book by David R. Conrad, *Education for Transformation* (ETC Publications, Palm Springs, CA, 1976). Another excellent book in this area is David W. Orr's *Ecological Literacy* (State University of New York Press, 1992).

V. Choices and Alternatives:

H: Many parents are beginning to realize the shortcomings of traditional education. But what can they do? Are there any schools in Japan like Kyoko's hypothetical community school-center which have a home environment approach to curriculum?

B: It is difficult to answer that question with a simple "Yes" or No." I do not know of any communities which have taken that kind of comprehensive, holistic approach to meeting the learning needs of children. And, given existing Japanese law and the control of the Ministry of Education, I suspect it would be difficult for a community to do so.

On the other hand, there are a number of hopeful things happening which are creating some choices for children's education. Let me mention some of these. First of all, more and more communities are awakening to the seriousness of educational problems and are undertaking various measures to improve educational opportunities. For example, the Social Welfare Departments of some communities are beginning to provide neighborhood play and learning centers, chiefly, it appears, to meet the needs of Japan's so-called "school refusers," elementary and junior high school age children who have simply refused to go to school. This kind of center may be a partial answer for some families.

H: You mentioned some other hopeful developments.

B: Yes. Another very encouraging and promising thing is beginning to happen. Increasing numbers of parents are taking over the responsibility of guiding their children's education themselves, rather than entrusting it to a traditional school. These parents, like Kyoko's parents, are sensitive to the growth needs of their child. They help the child plan a learning program built around the child's natural and social world and growing out of the child's inner potential and interests.

In doing this, they draw on community resources such as libraries, museums, parks, businesses, etc. Of course, this option may not be possible in all families. In many families both parents work. But even here, in some cases parents in this situation have developed programs for their children in cooperation with grandparents or some other adult who is deeply interested in the child. I have heard of some instances in Hawaii in which the children of two or three families who live in the same neighborhood carry out their learning programs under the guidance of one of the parents.

I urge parents to accept this kind of involvement and oversight of their child's learning even if they do not feel confident enough to carry the full responsibility themselves and have to send the child to a less than perfect school.

H: You mentioned school refusers? Could this approach work for families with a school refuser?

B: This is already happening. In the case of school refusers, the situation is being forced by the child refusing to attend school. The question is whether or not the parents have the motivation and the sensitivity to their child's inner potential and needs to be an effective teacher-guide for the child. Several organizations have developed in Japan in recent years specifically to help parents of school refusers understand and help their child.

H: Recently, I have heard a lot about alternative schools. Is an alternative school a possibility?

B: Yes, I understand there are more than 300 alternative schools in Japan, most of which have started just within the past fifteen years or so. A family might consider one of these schools. I would advise caution here, however. Parents should look carefully at an alternative school and its educational practices before enrolling their child. Some of these schools can be as harmful to a child as a traditional school.

H: Why is that? Can you explain?

B: Let me point out that one of the very important needs of a child is wise adult guidance in assisting the child develop inner discipline. Inner discipline is the basis for true freedom. The traditional school does not do this. The child is always controlled by external authority. It is constantly told what to do and when to do it. There is no opportunity for developing inner control and inner discipline.

But some alternative schools develop, not on the basis of an understanding of these developmental needs of children, but as a reaction to or rejection of the rigid authoritarianism of traditional education. Alternative school people who work on this basis sometimes tend to treat children as little adults who do not need guidance. In this view, all children need is to be freed from adult interference in their lives and they will naturally develop as they should. For this reason, some alternative schools become places of chaos. It is as difficult for children to develop inner discipline in this situation as it is in an authoritarian situation.

This is why I advise caution. Parents should be sure the teachers and administrators of an alternative school understand children's developmental needs before enrolling their child in the school.

Let me mention one other hopeful development. In spite of what I have said about the harmful effects of traditional schools, it is important to recognize that many teachers and school administrators in these schools are as dissatisfied with the present policies and practices of their schools as are parents, and they are sincerely trying to find ways to change and improve them. In some communities, the combined efforts of parents and concerned educators are resulting in significant changes in educational policies and practices. But again, a word of caution is in order. Too often education reform is superficial. The basic issue is whether the entrenched system of force-feeding students with meaningless bits of information in which they have no interest or need is still at the center of the learning process. In too many cases it is. Even many so-called alternative educators do little more than try to make the force-feeding more entertaining.

But there are some schools and communities that are seriously attempting to provide for the learning needs of children, within the limits of their particular situations. One example of such a school is Ojiya Elementary School, a public school in a rural community in Niigata Prefecture. In this community, school personnel, parents, and other members of the community are working together with children to make student-centered, direct learning experience possible for children. This community-oriented approach to human learning involving the cooperation of children, parents, educators, and other members of the community is the future I hope to see for education in cities and rural areas alike. (A description of Ojiya Elementary School is available in English from Caddo Gap Press in San Francisco. Written by Ikue Tezuka, the title is: *School with Forest and Meadow*).

VI. The Role of the Teacher

H: Let me ask you one final question. You have spent a lifetime as a teacher-educator. Could you summarize for our readers what you see as your central task as a teacher?

B: I believe my first responsibility is to help children and youth discover and learn how to actualize the unique, irreplaceable potential genius within them; it is not my responsibility to fill them with dead, factual knowledge. The lively, actualizing learner can—and does—quickly pick up factual knowledge when it is needed.

My second responsibility is to nurture in each learner a sense of wonder and respect for life through immersion in the natural world and in their community; it is my task to assist the learners in my charge to enter into conversation and dialogue with their surrounding environment. An important educational goal is to nurture in them the realization that all human activities have consequences for the larger world and ecosystem. This, in brief, expresses my views of what it means to be a teacher.

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ON THE SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN:

A Short, Angry History of Modern American Schooling

by John Taylor Gatto

Former New York State Teacher of the Year,
Three-time New York City Teacher of the Year
Author: DUMBING US DOWN, The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling,
THE EXHAUSTED SCHOOL, *and* THE EMPTY CHILD
Price: $5.00

I don't mean to be inflammatory, but it's as if government schooling has made people dumber not brighter; made families weaker, not stronger; ruined formal religion with its hard-sell exclusion of God from the upbringing of children; lowered income, set the class structure in stone by dividing children into classes and setting them against one another, and has been midwife to an alarming concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a fraction of the national community.

1.

The June, 1998 *Foreign Affairs* magazine extolled the American economy for its massive lead over Europe and Asia. In an article written by the owner of *U.S. News and World Report* and *The New York Daily News,* Mort Zuckerman, Zuckerman attributes our superiority (which he claims cannot be lost in the 21st century, so huge is it) to certain characteristics of the American worker and workplace. Reading between the lines, this advantage can only have come from our training of the young.

First, the American worker is a pushover, dominated by management with little to say about what happens. By contrast, Europe suffers from a strong craft tradition which demands a worker voice in decision-making. Asia is even worse off; there tradition and government interfere with what a business can do. The Islamic world is so far behind, "crippled" as it is by religion, Zuckerman didn't even bother to mention it.

In America, decisions are made by statistical rules which eliminate human sentimentality and guesswork; nobody else follows this path so rigorously. Our economy, Zuckerman boasts, is controlled by "an impersonal monetized market and a belief in scientific management."

His analysis makes further telling points. Like nowhere else, workers in America live in constant panic of being left out, they know companies owe them nothing, there is no power to appeal to from management's decisions. Fear is our secret supercharger. It gives management a flexibility other nations will never have. Even after six years of record economic expansion American workers "fret", says Zuckerman, knowing they might not survive.

In 1996 almost half the employees of large firms feared being laid off, nearly double the worry average of five years earlier, when things weren't nearly so good. This keeps wages under control. "Here" Zuckerman tells us, echoing Henry Ford, "the level of wages is controlled by 'the few hungry men at the gate.'" Here is the explanation for our widely unpopular open door immigration policy no other nation would tolerate. It is management's safeguard against wage increases and strong worker organizations.

Finally, our endless consumption completes the golden circle, consumption driven by an astonishing American addiction to novelty, says Zuckerman, which provides American business with the only reliable domestic market in the world. Elsewhere in hard times business dries up; here we continue to shop till we drop, mortgaging our futures to keep the flow of goods and services coming.

The American economy depends on school teaching us that status is purchased and that others run our lives; we learn there that the sources of joy and accomplishment are external, that contentment comes with possessions, seldom from within. School cuts our ability to concentrate to a few minutes duration, creating a life-long craving for relief from boredom through outside stimulation. In conjunction with television and computer games which employ the same teaching methodology, these lessons are permanently inscribed.

Americans are made impatient with absolute principles through our style of schooling. Whereas in Malaysia, Spain, Greece or Japan, children are deeply grounded in concepts of proper and improper behavior, Americans are trained to be pragmatic—whatever can be gotten away with, can be done. Virtually all annoying religious and moral principles are slowly extinguished in the practicum of schooling and through the anything-goes non-stop experience of advertising persuasion. This prepares habits needed for maximum management flexibility in a crime-ridden world where law rules, not morality

Real school reform would have to overthrow a powerful unseen adversary; the belief that the American experiment promising ordinary people sovereignty over the community and themselves was wrong-headed and childish, the belief, learned and reinforced endlessly in school, that ordinary people are too stupid and irresponsible to be trusted even to look out for themselves. When children run wild in the school institution, that lesson is hammered home day after day. We've all seen it, no wonder we all believe it.

2.

The secret of American schooling is that it doesn't teach the way children learn, nor is it supposed to. School was conceived to serve the economy and the social order rather than kids and families, that's why it's compulsory. As a consequence school can't really help anybody grow up much because its prime directive is to retard maturity. It does that by teaching that everything is difficult, that other people run our lives, and that our neighbors are untrustworthy, even dangerous.

School is the first impression children get of society and because first impressions are often decisive, school imprints kids with fear, suspicion of one another, and certain addictions for life. It ambushes natural intuition, faith, and love of adventure, wiping these out in favor of a gospel of rational procedure and management.

A while ago the *New York Times* sent a reporter to three daycare centers, one for prosperous white kids, one for black kids, one for Hispanic kids. All looked fine, but each gave only token personal attention because mathematically no more was possible. Communication was by cheerful admonitions like, "Don't do that, Wilma," or to-whom-it-may-concern statements like "It's line-up time." Workers saw their roles "more as managing children than interacting with them." Managing children is what professional child care is about in America; education has nothing to do with it.

Adult life is also increasingly managed in America with specialists like lawyers having a heavy hand in the management of adultcare here. We have 5 percent of the global population but three quarters of its attorneys. One in every 250 Americans is a lawyer, one in every 54 is a school employee.

Lawsuits and schools are new ways Americans talk to each other, through these institutions we dialogue having lost the habit of face to face meeting, even with our own children. American attention focuses on high volume corporate voices that direct the intimate details of existence, like the IRS, CBS or Blue Cross. We commit time to social machinery these days instead of people, striving resolutely to find our slots so we won't be left out. Turning from neighbors except as background noise, we go to institutions to manage grievances, shunning the human arguments with which disputes used to be solved.

Years ago I became curious about a possible connection between the forcing of school attendance and a crime-ridden society which heavily relies on law. In the common tradition there were only two reasons to seek formal adjudication: some-one broke a promise and monetary damage resulted (the basis for contract law), or someone encroached on important human rights (the basis for tort and criminal law).

The phenomenal number of lawyers in America reflects in part a social crisis which sees five times the fraction of citizens incarcerated at century's end than 50 years earlier--and four times the violent crimes, even after the decline of recent years is factored in. A huge number of Americans break promises, encroach or threaten to, enough that everyone must be regarded suspiciously. Chris Lasch once said 22 percent of all American employment revolves around some aspect of controlling deviance, civil or criminal. Why do we violate each other so often a million lawyers are necessary to help preserve order?

3.

Behind the melodrama of lurid school headlines, beyond hammer attacks on pregnant schoolteachers, paramilitary assaults on elementary schools by students whose cheeks have never felt a razor, past the red herring of falling or rising SAT scores, what seems clear to me after 30 years in the business is that school is a place where children learn to dislike each other. What causes that?

A UCLA study of 1016 public schools found teachers average 7 minutes daily in personal exchanges with students. Divided among 30 kids, a total of 14 odd seconds each. Constant scrambling for attention and status in the close confines of a class room, where those things are only officially conferred by an adult who lacks both time and information enough to be fair, teaches us to dislike and distrust one another. This continuous invisible auction has something to do with our anger and our inability to be honest and responsible, even as adults. And yet, ironically, irresponsibility serves the management ideal better than decent behavior ever could; it demands close management, it justifies all those lawyers, courts, police and schools.

Now either we are structurally undependable, necessitating constant admonition and policing, or somehow we have been robbed of our ability to become responsible. Consider the strange possibility we have been deliberately taught to be irresponsible and to dislike each other for some good purpose. Julius Caesar called it dividing and conquering. It's crazy, I know, but be patient with me.

I spent 19 years as a student, 30 more as a teacher. In all that time I was seldom asked to be responsible unless you mistake obedience and responsibility for the same thing. Whether student or teacher I gave reflexive obedience to strangers for 49 years. If that isn't a recipe for irresponsibility, nothing is. In school the payoff comes from giving up personal responsibility, just doing what you're told by strangers. There isn't any way to grow up in school, it won't let you.

As I watched it happen, it took three years to break a kid, three years confined to an environment of emotional neediness--songs, smiles, bright colors and cooperative games did the work better than angry words and punishments. Constant supplication for attention creates a chemistry whose products are characteristics of modern schoolchildren: whining, treachery, dishonesty, malice, cruelty and similar traits. Ceaseless competition for attention in the dramatic fishbowl of a classroom reliably delivers cowardly children, toadies, stoolies. Little people sunk in chronic boredom, little people with no apparent purpose—as with caged rats pressing a bar for sustenance who develop inexplicable mannerisms, the bizarre behavior kids display is a function of the reinforcement schedule and the confinement. Children like this need management.

Suppose that producing incomplete beings is the purpose of modern mass forced schooling; suppose further there is a rational defense for doing it; suppose a century ago far-sighted men and women saw that to realize the potential in machinery and fossil fuels, the bulk of the population would have to be dumbed down and made dependent, not to hurt people but because only in this fashion could a population of producers be turned into the consumers required by a commercially intense economy. And the labor force made sufficiently adaptable to endure modern machinery which must rapidly evolve forever.

These weren't villains but the brightest Americans, afire with quasi-religious scientific zeal, men and women who wanted the greatest good for the greatest number. Their moral outlook departed from Bill of Rights morality, however, it was grounded instead in science, unsentimentally recognizing that some people would have to be sacrificed but all was for the best in the end. A lot of eggs must crack, a lot of lives be managed, before a banquet omelet can be cooked.

The engineering problem confronting this group at the beginning of the 20th century was this: how could a proud, liberty-loving nation of independent families and villages be turned out of its historic tradition of self-reliance and independence? Grown-ups were unlikely to be tractable but history and the highly personalized practice of local schooling offered another possibility. Social thinkers had speculated for millennia that a political state which seized control of the young could perform miracles and while the only instrument adequate to such a project, forced schooling, had never been more than a freak in the West, successful only in the military theocracy of Prussia in the Germanys, Horace Mann's pilgrimage to Prussia in the 1840s became a harbinger of our future set in motion.

4.

The twentieth century ends with mass schooling threatening to swallow early childhood, too, into a round of forced kindergarten exercises, but even after a century of victorious nationalized schooling inspired by Mann's love of Prussia, there is no agreement what an educated American should look like. School is still a police activity; education remains a slippery concept.

And yet I suspect you and I agree on at least part of the formula because to be fully American demands we understand that certain rights are "inalienable," and to realize we have written contracts called The Declaration, Constitution, and the Bill of Rights which confer power on ordinary people. Surely it is self-destructive not to know these things and know how to defend them, just as it would be unconscionable not to teach them. These rights aren't the whole of a good education, but no American ignorant of the reasoning which supports them is properly educated.

Keep that in mind as we walk around modern schooling because these rights are our touchstone— if children aren't grounded deeply in their rights and how to defend them, it's no tabloid leap to suspect schools won't scruple to stray in other important areas. Not teaching children the contract of this constitutional republic is tantamount to not teaching little Eskimos to hunt or endure cold. It's a way of dismissing their lives as insignificant.

Start with The Declaration as a searchlight illuminating the other founding documents. There, English rule is ended for the crime of violating natural law, that higher law beyond reach of legislators. The Declaration has inspired common people around this planet for hundreds of years because the thing subordinates political law to natural law, the kind that doesn't take a lawyer to understand. In doing so it reduces the power of sultans and presidents to fallible human scale.

Legislatures don't give rights to us, says the Declaration, we are born with them. Without our consent the political state is only a monster—and illegitimate government deserves whatever violence it takes to get quit of it.

The Declaration also implies that elites which try to modify the people's rights are morally degenerate. Now you may argue that is foolish and unscientific, and unscientific it certainly is. You may believe the best experts should be free of limiting obligations to the ignorant. But if in America you act on such a belief to take natural rights away, by the law of this land you are a criminal. Even if courts wink, as they often have done in the twentieth century, and whisper, "Go to it, Jack, the people are stupid," you aren't home free because in doing that the court becomes a party to conspiracy.

The moral center of a free people resides in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, say our documents; that's not happiness as the best minds define it, but happiness by our own lights. As the Supreme Court once ruled in a bright moment, "Freedom to differ is not limited to things that do not matter much. That would be a mere shadow of freedom."

We have started a government, says the Declaration, to defend natural rights. The founders knew that being managed was hideously destructive to human genius so they ringed the political state about with heavy limitations. It could not offer schooling, for instance, even voluntary schooling. Such power was omitted because it was well understood how easily mass instruction, such as Hindus imposed on their common classes, becomes mental tyranny. No constitutional debate addresses education. Weapons, yes; education, no.

There are no political documents like these brilliant things anywhere, an announcement of monumental trust in the people, not in experts or elites. But printed words are a flimsy shield. If government officials decide to betray this trust, only militant public vigilance can call them to account. The only way the brilliant promise of America is kept is to ground our children in how precious these rights are, too precious to trust their preservation to expert managers.

At the beginning of the 20th century, however, this trust was vested in managers of the new forced schooling institution. It was as if the winter rations of an Eskimo had been given over to a polar bear for safekeeping, "Here you big bear, watch this seal meat until I get back."

5.

In the first decades of the new school century a group of famous academics, symbolically led by Edward Thorndike and John Dewey of Columbia Teachers College, and their industrialist allies, decided to bend government schooling to the service of business and the political state as it had been bent in Germany. A higher mission would exist, too; schools would serve as instruments for managing evolution, establishing conditions for selective breeding "before the masses take things into their own hands," in Thorndike's memorable words. Standardized testing would separate those fit to breed and work from those unfit.

Of course America, because of its traditions, was a rough population on which to experiment directly. But thanks to the interest and patronage of various international business people a group of academics and social engineers were able to visit mainland China in the first three decades of the 1900s and even to live there as did John Dewey and try out theories there. Because of its western-inspired and-financed revolution, China was in a favorable state of social disintegration at the time, favorable for laboratory testing of pedagogical theories—just as Russia was to become in the 1920s for similar reasons. Out of this tinkering arose a Chinese practice called "the Dangan," a personnel file exposing a student's lifelong personal history, following its subject from birth, abolishing the right to privacy. In China today nobody works without a Dangan.

In the mid-1960s the Dangan arrived back in America when information reservoirs associated with schooling began to store personal information. As data transfer became more efficient, a new class of expert like Ralph Tyler of the Carnegie Foundation and Richard Wolf, a psychology professor began to urge the quiet collection of data and its unification in code to enhance cross-referencing. By 1971, Wolf was defending test questions which identify individual children psychologically, justifying such surreptitious data assembly as the moral right of institutions.

6.

But back before WW I, educational psychology, the creation of Edward Thorndike, had established that certain mental training, in history, philosophy. and rhetoric, for instance, made students resistant to manipulation, reduced their plasticity. That knowledge, coupled with the new Germanic school directive to serve corporation and government, provided a sufficient motive to dumb instruction down. Between 1906 and 1920 a handful of world-famous industrialists and financiers, together with their private foundations, hand-picked university administrators and house politicians, spent more attention and money on forced schooling than the national government did. Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller alone spent more than the government did. In this fashion a system for modern schooling was constructed outside the public eye. Listen to John D. Rockefeller's General Education Board speaking in its very first mission statement:

> *In our dreams...people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands. The present education conventions [intellectual and character education] fade from their minds, and unhampered by tradition we work our own good will upon a grateful and responsive folk. We shall not try to make these people or any of their children into philosophers or men of learning or men of science. We have not to raise up from them authors, educators, poets or men of letters. We shall not search for embryo great artists, painters, musicians, nor lawyers, doctors, preachers, politicians, statesmen, of whom we have an ample supply. The task is simple. We will organize children and teach them in a perfect way the things their fathers and mothers are doing in an imperfect way.*
>
> —*Occasional Letter No. I*

It wasn't greed that drove this astonishing project to organize everybody and everything but something much grander. Those who sprang forced schooling on America shared a social dream first enunciated by the European 17th century educator, Comenius—political and economic unification of the globe. These presumptive planetary managers didn't hate ordinary people, but they did consider them waste products of evolution. They wanted a utopia such as Bellamy had sketched in *Looking Backwards*, one with the most advanced people in charge.

America, in its traditions and its radical founding documents, posed the greatest obstacle to this dream's realization. America would have to be tricked into surrender. School would be the house of mirrors to accomplish this.

To achieve a complete makeover these social engineers were prepared to radically break with the past; for example in a number of states they initiated a revolutionary procedure in reproductive management: forced sterilization of the unfit. As German doctors testified at Nuremberg, forced sterilization as official policy began in the U.S. in Indiana, spreading east and west from there where it was eventually studied by the government of Germany, Japan, Russia and China. Meanwhile a softer form of ethnic and cultural cleansing was the mission assigned to schools. The curricula of these places was psychologized to an end called "Americanization." But it was nothing of the sort.

In these early days, the best people steered by a beacon supplied by Charles Darwin's second book,*Descent of Man* (1871) in which Darwin identified the U.S. as repository for the world's most advanced evolutionary stock, but warned that if the small refined fraction of germ plasm was polluted by crossing with the dead-end genes of the majority, biological catastrophe would ensue. Darwin's brilliant first cousin, Francis Galton, saw school would be the great sorting-machine, and statistical decision-making would put the policy out of popular reach.

The men and women who gave us forced schooling understood social and economic leverage. They had vast advantages in overthrowing a libertarian social order: coherent perspective, common goals, generous capital, the status of folk heroes in the managed press, influence over a network of practical men of affairs in every city and town through the reach of their commercial enterprises. And they could tap a large pool of academic talent in universities they sponsored whose boards were loaded with kinsmen and friends. For all these reasons this little band exercised heavy influence over the shape of schooling in its formative years. Other influences were important, but none matched this resolve to establish a benevolent American ruling class capable of managing the dangerous democracy enthroned by our founding documents.

Following the best Prussian precedent, school was to function as the scientific forge of a dual proletariat: an ordinary one to hew wood and draw water, and a professional proletariat of college professors, doctors, editors, engineers, lawyers, architects and the like to act as English middle classes did—as high level servants of the policy classes, tightly managed through a ration of petty privileges which could be withdrawn at the first sign of obstreperousness. After police and schools, this secondary proletariat would act as sanitary barrier against democratic excess.

Pontificating in this outrageous fashion embarrasses me because I know how it must sound to people with kids to raise and deadlines to meet, but the truth is more outrageous than anything I could make up. For instance, the style of dumbed-down schooling forced on New York City by Rockefeller's General Education Board was developed in the U.S. Steel company town of Gary, Indiana. This so-called Gary Plan was temporarily driven back in

1917 by street riots on the part of German Jewish immigrants who recognized the scheme as the very one they fled Germany to escape.

7.

The real purpose of modern schooling was announced by legendary sociologist Edward Ross in his manifesto of 1906, Social Control. In it Ross wrote, "Plans are underway to replace community, family, and church with propaganda, education [he meant schooling] and mass media ....People are only little plastic lumps of dough." Another insider, H.H. Goddard, Chairman of Psychology at Princeton, called government schooling approvingly, "the perfect organization of the hive." Goddard wrote further that standardized testing would cause lower classes to confront their biological inferiority (sort of like wearing a dunce cap). In time that would discourage reproduction among the ants in the anthill.

Such candor by schoolmen didn't end in the early years of the century; in 1989 for instance, Shirley McCune, senior director of the Mid-Continent Regional Education laboratory, addressed the 50 governors of American states with a declaration that radical social change was not happening by accident. "What we're into is a total restructuring of society," said McCune.

Between 1967-1974 teacher training in the U.S. was comprehensively and covertly revamped through coordinated efforts of certain foundations, corporations, universities, and other organizational interests working through the U.S. Office of Education and key state education departments. Among the critical documents in this transformation was a multi-state USOE project called "Designing Education for the Future," a Behavioral Teacher Education Project set forth in an enormous manual of better than a thousand pages, and Benjamin Bloom's three-volume *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.*

The "Designs" papers arose from illegal collusion between the federal education department and the so-called independent state agencies which had one by one been drawn as inferiors into a federally led coalition through carrot and stick administration of federal and foundation monies. "Designing Education for the Future" boldly redefined education after the Germanic fashion as "a means to achieve important economic and social goals of a national character." State agencies would henceforth act as enforcers to ensure the compliance of local schools with federal directives, the most important directive being that each "state education department must be an agent of change." There could be no mistaking the imperative; "change must be institutionalized" the essays reiterate in a number of ways. State education departments were to "lose identity" as well as the authority in order to "form a partnership with the federal government ."

The Behavioral Teacher Education Project outlines the teaching reforms to be forced upon schoolteachers after 1967. This project, put together at Michigan State University [U.S. Office of Education contract number OEC-0-9-320424-4042 (010)], set out in clear language the outlook and intent of its creators to transform teaching into "impersonal manipulation," in preparation for a future America in which "few will be able to maintain control over their opinions." The new America forecast by the Behavioral Teacher Education Project was one where "each individual receives at birth a multipurpose identification number" enabling "employers and other controllers" to keep track of the subject population—and which could expose it to direct or subliminal influence when necessary. Here was a point of view dripping with emotionless contempt for traditional American personal sovereignty. Such language is itself a powerful training device.

In the BTEP readers learned that "chemical experimentation" on minors would be normal procedure after 1967, a strong foreshadowing of the massive Ritalin interventions of the next three decades. Teachers, readers were told, would have to become "change agents" while behavioral science replaced academic curriculum in the schools. It was to be a world, in the Project's words, "in which a small elite" controlled all important matters, where participatory democracy would largely disappear. Children were to be made to see that people are so irresponsible they must be constantly controlled and disciplined by authorities. Curriculum content in the new form of schooling would focus on "interpersonal relationships, and pleasure cultivation... and other attitudes and skills compatible with a non-work world". The new change agent schools would convert teacher to a behavioral technician, translating the recommendations of "behavioral scientists" into "practical action-research in classrooms".

The most publicly available of critical documents mandating the conversion of government schools (and of any schools accepting government money) into behavioral laboratories was Benjamin Bloom's *Taxonomy* (in the Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Domains), the foundation of a number of descendant forms, most recently the exercise in mind-colonization known as "Outcomes-Based Education,"(a close imitation of the corporate management philosophy known as "Managing By Objectives." In both the operant concept is "management").

Bloom claimed to have fabricated a tool from the lore of behaviorism to classify "the ways individuals are to act, think, or feel as the result of participating in some unit of instruction." In this fashion children would efficiently learn prescribed attitudes and have the contradictory attitudes brought from home "remediated". In all stages of this impersonal manipulation process, testing would be essential to locate the coordinates of the child's mind on the official continuum preparatory to determining his or her suitability for various forms of work.

In I971 the U.S. Office of Education, now determined to gain access to private lives and thoughts, granted contracts for seven volumes of change-agent studies to the Rand Corporation. Change agent training was launched with federal funding under the Education Professions Development Act. Soon afterwards "The Change Agent's Guide to Innovation in Education" appeared. Grants were awarded to colleges for the training of change agents while further Rand documents like "Factors Affecting Change Agent Projects" continued to pour forth for implementation through teacher training courses. Machiavelli had been modernized.

Out of these documents and USOE-sponsored workshops appeared "The Delphi Technique," a sophisticated animal training procedure in which a change agent, posing as a neutral discussion "facilitator," would actually identify potential opposition in community discussions of school issues (where a politically correct outcome had already been decided upon in advance by the change agent's sponsors); after determining who might be an obstacle to the group's "voluntarily" agreeing to do what was desired, the facilitator would pit the majority against the unwitting dissenters using the known techniques of crowd agitators.* The shock experienced when the heretofore courteous facilitator turned from other participants and began barking insults and egging on similar attacks from other participants was usually enough to win the point. According to the "Change Agents Guide", the purpose of the Delphi Technique was to turn potentially hostile committee members into acquiescents, to freeze and unfreeze values, and in general to implement change.

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* The author was himself subjected to a Delphi Technique attack at the Snowbird resort near Salt Lake City in 1990. The occasion was a conference held by the "Impact Program" and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in order that teams of teachers, one representing each state, could envision various schools of the future. The author's team, in envisioning "Odysseus Schools" built around the primacy of family in any scheme of human meaning, apparently committed some heresy against the consensus prepared in advance by convention sponsors who intended, I believe, to allow only those bits from each design into the final project which accorded with the sponsor's (unstated) vision. During a discussion of the final document, I suddenly

The original generators of the Delphi methodology were probably Hilda Taba, an influential psychologist who mentored Ralph Tyler, head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the so-called Frankfurt Group of psychologists, and British Military Intelligence researches on psychological disruption during WW II.

In 1991. a leading publicist for American public schooling, Gerald Bracey, wrote in his annual report: "We must continue to produce an uneducated social class..." 1990s legislation like School to Work and efforts to merge the Labor Department with Education served as surfacings of the real creature hidden inside school buildings. Using computerized cross-referencing programs like WORKLINK, the Dangan was being brought to America.

8.

However you slice it, something strange has been going on in the schools of America since shortly after the end of WW I. It's not difficult to trace its infancy to the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. As nearly as I can name it, what we are experiencing is an attempt, quite successful so far, to impose the strong class society of England on the U.S.—using forced schooling as the lever.

This bizarre phenomenon isn't confined to school; it reflects in our housing and economy. As America enters a new century, eleven percent of its people live in walled and gated communities or guarded buildings, a fraction expected by MIT to grow to 20

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found myself undergoing a vicious personal attack on my motives in public! Coming from Pittsburgh as I do, and trained to respond reflexively to insult, I was partially able to turn the attack, but no hint of the Odysseus Design appeared in the final document, although we had been told every vision would be honored. What actually was printed as our contribution was a featureless mush, one calculated to enlarge the reach of schooling, not diminish it.

percent by the year 2005, a rather liberal concession in light of Darwin's warning.

In contrast to our 20 percent, when universal forced schooling began in Prussia in 1819, policy-makers thought only one-half of one percent could be allowed to learn to think in broad contextual ways. More than that would be socially destructive. Another 5 1/2 percent could be trained in narrowly socialized disciplines, these would be the professional proles. As for the bottom 94 percent, it would have to be dumbed down, its mind and character significantly decommissioned by a steady regimen of soft-core behavioral drills combined with fun and games and relentlessly managed through the childhood years. England, slightly more liberal (and considerably more arrogant), was willing to allow the privilege of mentality to about 8 percent.

But U.S. history and tradition determined that as many as 20-30 percent could be allowed full or at least partial use of mind. That's where the matter rested as the 20th century began, with 25 percent of the young completing an intellectually tough secondary education, on a par with elite colleges today. In the relatively porous economy and society of that time, many lightly schooled individuals as well rose through the loose guards of society to claim positions of distinction.

For the proto-religion of scientific management, however, trusting the disposition of important positions to personal judgment and laissez-faire merit was intolerable. For society to be scientific, *who-could-do-what* had to be determined by a centralized command structure. Bringing this about required the first 75 years of the century; it entailed dragging virtually 100 percent of the children into universal forced schooling until they were fully grown.

The crude power and resources to make this happen came from industry and government, but the *anima*, the soul of the thing, was a more complex distillate composed of ancient exclusionary religions, philosophies, and politics precipitated anew as scholarship. All this frantic activity was disguised by the importation of the German research university codex to America at the end of the 19th century. Schools like Columbia Teachers, Chicago, Stanford, Johns Hopkins, Wisconsin, and others joined in concert with older torch-bearers for strong class theory like Yale to provide a new purpose for wealth and social class privilege—mastering the secret of evolution and parlaying them into Utopia.

Indiana University provides a clear case study of what was going on. By 1900 a special study existed there for elite students hand-picked by the college president, David Starr Jordan, who taught the course. Called "Bionomics," it was a why and how of the basis for a new evolutionary ruling class. Jordan did so well on this he was invited into the big-time college world as first president of Stanford University. Jordan took his star bionomics protégé, Ellwood Cubberly, along with him as Dean of Teacher Education. Within two decades Cubberly was the most influential schoolman in America, head of the Education Trust, an invisible syndicate controlling school administrative posts from coast to coast, and the premier historian of American schooling.

Bionomics, or evolutionary elitism, had striking advantages over earlier forms of privilege which invariably provoked their own overthrow. In this new logic, the best from the underclasses could be tagged in lower schooling, strategically weaned from its home culture through judicious application of reinforcement. This would invigorate the higher classes, bleed prospective leadership from the lower. To a scientific morality, all sensible and fair.

Using school as a principal forge, the building blocks of a self-perpetuating ruling organization organized on scientific principles moved into place during the first five decades of the 20th century. Obstacles like religion, tradition, family, and natural rights guaranteed by our founding documents were steadily neutralized. School became after WWI a huge social reconstruction project conducted with the enthusiasm of evangelical religion. The traditional God was banished before 1950, replaced by psychological missionaries and social work agencies. Public school transmuted into a social laboratory without public knowledge or consent. Think of what happened as a second American revolution striking down those perverse founding documents that granted sovereignty to ordinary folk.

9.

Sacred texts for this transformation were various, but a principal gospel was Sir Henry Charles Maine's *Popular Government,* printed in 1885. Maine, Britain's most important legal mind, declared unequivocally that higher society could only exist through a violent thwarting of public will. So much for our Declaration of Independence. Theodore Roosevelt echoed Maine's thesis in his *Winning of the West* (1889), calling his followers to recognize that "the most righteous of all wars is a war with savages." Driving the savage off his land, said Roosevelt, was the sacred duty of civilized people. An inevitable parallel existed between those savage by circumstances and those eternally savaged by bad biology. For the latter, Mista Kurtz's advice, "Exterminate the brutes," was the formula.

To say this bionomical spirit infected schooling is to say birds fly. You can track the principle's growth easily once you know it's there. In 1922 Walter Lippman's *Public Opinion* demanded "severe restrictions on public debate." The old ideal of participatory democracy was insane, said Lippman, in anticipation of the Behavioral Project of 1997.

In 1922, Sigmund Freud's favorite nephew, Edward L. Bernays, godfather of a new persuasive art called public relations, announced in his book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* that an "invisible power" was in control of every aspect of American life. This power, however, needed to learn sophistication, how to manufacture opinion on both sides of every public question, a product Bernays just happened to be selling. Democracy was only a front for skillful wire-pulling, tricks the new sciences of mental manipulation could place at the disposal of policy people.

By 1944, the project of jettisoning natural rights resonated through every corner of American academic life. Any academic who expected free money from foundations, corporations, or government agencies was required to play the scientific management string on his lute. By 1961 the concept of political state as proper sovereign surfaced in John F. Kennedy's Inaugural address, when his listeners were lectured, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Specific injunctions on how to bring this about now began to appear everywhere in print. The Trilateral Commission's 1975 sponsorship of a book called *The Crisis of Democracy* is representative of many. *Crisis* informed readers that world order was jeopardized by a disease called "hyperdemocracy," which had shut down the war in Vietnam.

Hyperdemocracy could be cured by three medicines: 1) muzzling of the press; 2) narrowing the meaning of democracy, (presumably through school, court, and police action); and 3) "forceful assertion" of elite control. In a few years the meaning of forceful assertion came clear in Waco, Ruby Ridge, and with the spectacular flaming deaths of 100,000 retreating Iraqui peasants, executed simultaneously in Technicolor at the conclusion of our military confrontation with Iraq.

By January, 1995 *Time Magazine* could inform its readers in a cover story that "democracy is in the worst interest of national goals. The modern world is too complex to allow the man and woman in the street to interfere in its management." At last, part of the secret was out in the open. In the same year, art film houses treated their specialized patrons to another chunk of the secret. In a long documentary film, *Manufacturing Consent*, famous MIT linguistics professor Noam Chomsky asserted that all the news in the world pouring through familiar mass channels was under the control of 23 global corporations. These spun propaganda whenever important interests were in question, confirming Edward L. Bernays' boast of 67 years earlier.

But propaganda to what end? The answer was propaganda to the end of a better, richer, healthier society—just not one intended for all the people or even most of them, perhaps for 20 percent at best. News had become a prop furthering the interests of an exclusionary management which intended to place social control firmly in the hands of evolution's favorites. Exclusionary biology was driving the thing, including its population control programs and environmental concerns. School was the production line of the project.

Johns Hopkins University Press offered this evidence in 1996: "The American economy has grown massively since the mid-60s, but workers' real spendable wages are no higher than they were thirty years ago." Purchasing power of a working couple in 1995 was earned by a single working man 90 years earlier. This steep decline in common prosperity forced both parents from home, and their kids into the management of daycare and extended schooling. Although we were harangued endlessly that enlarging the scope of schooling would cause wealth to be more evenly spread, the reverse occurred. Wealth was 250 percent more concentrated by 1998 than it was in 1898.

I don't mean to be inflammatory, but it's as if government schooling has made people dumber, not brighter; made families weaker, not stronger; ruined formal religion with its hard-sell exclusion of God from the upbringing of children; lowered income, set the class structure in stone by dividing children into classes and setting them against one another, and has been midwife to an alarming concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a fraction of the national community.

10.

School was a lie from the beginning; it continues to be a lie. You hear a great deal of nonsense these days about the need for a high-tech economy for well-educated people, when the truth staring you in the face is that it requires no such thing. As our economy is rationalized into automaticity and globalization, it becomes more and more a set of interlocking subsystems coordinated centrally by mathematical formulae which cannot accommodate different ways of thinking and knowing. Our profitable system demands radically incomplete customers and workers to make it go. Educated people are its enemies.

There can be no doubt that the fantastic wealth of American big business is a direct result of schools training a social mass to be needy, frightened, envious, bored, talentless, incomplete. A successful mass production economy must have such an audience. It isn't "anybody's "fault." Just as the Amish small business/small farm economy requires intelligence, competence, thoughtfulness, and compassion, ours needs a well-managed mass. Leveled, spiritless, familyless, friendless, communityless, godless, and conforming people are best—people who can believe that the difference between Coke and Pepsi is a subject worth arguing about.

Schools turn out characters that can be shaped according to the market logic of the moment. In exchange the market promises riches and keeps its promise. But the price of this deal for rich and poor alike has been to surrender a big chunk of our minds and characters. A critical fraction of the population is left free as the vanguard of a new race of superpeople, alleged to be forthcoming some day in the genes. But the uncritical mass needed to support this project is forged by long immersion in laboratories of behavioral modification we call schools, managed by employees of the state wholly innocent of their role called schoolteachers. And recently, "day care" workers.

The premises of scientific corporate schooling seem impossible to refute, so thoroughly have they been demonstrated by the form of schooling corporations imposed on us a century ago. Why should hopelessly ignorant, irresponsible people be allowed to make decisions of significance, even intimate personal ones like how to raise their own children? Certified experts are available who know vastly more about everything. Jefferson and Madison must have been loony to trust the people.

Let me take a stab at a reply. To get better schools that actually served us instead of suffocating us, we would need to successfully challenge certain assumptions: for instance, we would need to abandon entirely the idea that any such reality as mass man actually exists; we would have to believe what fingerprints and intuition tell us—that no two people are alike, that nobody can be accurately described by numbers, that trying to do this sets up a chain of future griefs. We would have to accept that no such thing as a science of pedagogy is possible, that each individual has a private destiny. We would need to transfer faith to such principles, and behave as if they were true.

We would have to come to our senses and admit that knowledge is not wisdom. We would have to believe each American has the right to live as he or she deems wise, provided only they do no harm to others. If the way individuals choose means disaster for corporations—as the Amish way embraced by too many would surely be—the fateful choice would still have to be honored because it is protected by the only contract that defines us, our founding documents and natural law.

It's time to remember what mankind needed an America for in the first place. The brilliant dialectical balance struck by our founders was a way to keep power weak and off-balance, official power and popular power both. Popular will would check government tyranny; government would check popular tyranny over minority rights. This constant confrontation, this unwinnable war between two permanently flawed collectivizing principles—coercive government and bullying public opinion—produces liberty for those who want it. In the stalemate, liberty escapes.

Lately what has happened is this: in an effort to avoid the damnable arguments of the people and become more efficient, management has wrecked the political balance and made us all prisoners of management systems. School is its vital ally.

And now for the exorcism. Enough, Demon, come out of us! In the name of God and the angels. *In nomine patriae, et filii, et spiritui sancti.* Get you gone accursed management spirit! We can manage ourselves. Go back to the flames where you belong! What we have built in mass forced schooling cannot be reformed; it must be banished entirely. It was created by people, people can take it apart.

The great dirty secret of American schooling is that it doesn't teach the way kids learn and that it cannot be permitted to do so without crashing the economy by allowing children to grow up. To rehumanize schooling we would need, simultaneously, to re-humanize the economy and abandon our dreams of empire.

The test of the substance of freedom, wrote The Supreme Court in the flag-burning case, "is the right to differ as to things that touch the heart of the existing order." That is the standard. Very well then, let us strike to the heart of this thing and take back our lives from the management engineers.

DIGGING IN THE GROUND

by Orin Domenico

For Robert Bly whose practice of solitude and presence has helped me greatly in the search for my own.

"Nothing can be more useful to a man than a determination not to be hurried."

—Henry David Thoreau

I didn't want to go back to school this September. I've never been thrilled by the prospect, but in the past I've always managed to summon a bit of enthusiasm for the new year. There were new teaching ideas, new books, a strong Advanced Placement group—something to look forward to. This year, nothing but dread.

This summer past was the first since I began teaching, nine years ago, that I had had the entire summer off to follow my own pursuits, which I had hoped would become passions. In past summers there had always been some thing or combination of things—summer school, an NEH fellowship or seminar, a thesis to write, and/or a big home improvement project—to occupy my time and attention. But this summer there was just me and my desire. It was an experiment of mixing volatile elements and waiting for an explosion of creativity, a big bang, that never came, only a muffled boom near the end, but the project had not been a failure. Most of the summer had been spent in a rather torpid moratorium waiting for some mysterious transformation of energy to impel me into creative motion, waiting for real poems, fresh metaphors, profound new ideas to spring daily from my pen, waiting to burst suddenly and spontaneously into flame. Toward the end of August, when the juices finally started flowing, I realized that what had felt like time wasted had been a very necessary period of inaction, a slow, and at times excruciating burning away of impediments to passion. I finished with only a handful of decent new poems, but with new knowledge of who I am and of what I am compelled to keep working at. I was in awe of how the gods work in us when we allow space and time for that to happen, but my sense of wonder was rapidly dissipating into fear, for something wicked this way came, the monster school, poised in the path ahead, set to devour all my time and space. But, I am getting ahead of myself; I want to linger a little longer in the warmth of summer, to further consider this idea of waiting.

The poet, Robert Bly, in *The Winged Life*, his wonderful little book on and of Thoreau, tells of Thoreau's very conscious decision to *not* live his father's life, to not "live meanly." Bly maintains that when anyone makes such a decision, "a waiting period is a part of it."

> When a man or woman determines to leap over the petty life and tries to hatch the egg dormant in the apple wood, he or she needs leisure time, and the courage to take it. Courage is needed to withstand the melancholy and the loneliness. He or she learns that for years nothing tangible will come from this inward and invisible swerving. No fruit will appear that his or her family or the surrounding society can eat. (52)

Bly, who borrows the term moratorium from Erik Erikson, says that it is possible that in earlier times the young, through initiation groups, were given permission to take this time for themselves, but that "Now each person has to demand, create and defend his or her own." He feels that "Thoreau's declaration of the need for a moratorium is his greatest gift to the young." (53) Though I agree with Bly, I continue to work in an educational system that not only denies the need for a moratorium period but does everything possible to discourage even momentary reflection or healthy self absorption. No wonder I dreaded going back to school.

I sometimes think that the ultimate American irony is that we Americans actually fear real freedom more than just about anything else. We certainly have a public school system that does everything it can to condition people against taking their own freedom and granting freedom to others. Even if we take our kids out of school and teach them at home, as my wife and I did two years ago, or move them into more open alternative schools, what makes us so confident that we can teach something that we ourselves have had so little experience practicing? Something crucial has been absent from so much of the literature I read from the rapidly growing home and alternative education movements. No one that I have read has acknowledged how very difficult it is to actually allow our children or students the freedom that we so value in our statements of intent or how difficult it is to embody what we preach to them. I wrote in an earlier essay that I believe that you can only teach what you yourself practice. John Taylor Gatto has written, "You teach who are. Even if never a word is said about it you teach these things loud and clear." (from "Bitter Lessons—

What's Wrong with American Teachers," which originally appeared in *The Sun*)

The home and alternative education movement is often, and I think accurately, described as a paradigm shift from what Paulo Freire called the old "banking" model of education. And if entering the new model involves a paradigm shift, what makes us so confident that those of us raised and schooled in the old paradigm can comfortably and readily move into the new? How can we believe, if we are not following our own bliss, if we are not full of passionate intensity for life and learning, that we can teach that path to others? If we allow ourselves to be driven by the automatic forces that drive our materialistic, impersonalized society, how do we teach our children freedom and self- responsibility? If we have not cultivated in ourselves a love for hard work, a degree of self-discipline, and a capacity for sustained critical thinking. how do we hope to inspire them to such cultivation? If we do not get to know ourselves and God throuqh solitude and contemplation, how will they ever find their way into necessary silence amid the noisy distractions of our addictive junk culture? If we are still servants indentured to the institutions of the old paradigm (read corporate world, not just public school), how do we teach them to listen for a calling rather than choose a career? Perhaps others had already resolved these issues, but these were the sort of problems this would-be pilgrim on the path to wholeness chewed upon as he reluctantly approached the new academic year. These ruminations led to a growing conviction that such questions could only be answered individually in the sort of silence and solitude that my brief moratorium had allowed me, the sort of silence and solitude that the public school system does not allow and that the society it serves does everything it can to discourage. As you read on in this essay, it may sound at times as if I am addressing only those who are currently involved in some way with the school system, but remember, if you went through this system, if you spent thirteen or so years being conditioned by it, you are it.

Part II

"I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty
to know what occurs but not recognize the fact."
—William Stafford (135)

In an age when totalitarianism has striven, in every way, to devaluate and degrade the human person, we hope it is right to demand a hearing for any and every sane reaction in favor of man's inalienable solitude and his interior freedom...It is all very well to insist that man is a "social animal"—the fact is obvious enough. But that is no justification for making him a mere cog in a totalitarian machine...

In actual fact, society depends for its existence on the inviolable personal solitude of its members. Society, to merit its name, must not be made up of numbers, or mechanical units, but of persons. To be a person implies responsibility and freedom, and both these imply a certain interior solitude, a sense of personal integrity, a sense of one's own reality and of one's ability to give himself to society—or to refuse that gift.

> When men are merely submerged in a mass of impersonal human beings pushed around by automatic forces, they lose their true humanity, their integrity, their ability to love, their capacity for self-determination. When society is made up of men who know no interior solitude it can no longer be held together by love: and consequently is held together by a violent and abusive authority. But when men are violently deprived of the solitude and freedom which they are due, the society in which they live becomes putrid, it festers with servility, resentment and hate.
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> —Thomas Merton (x-xi)

In the sort of totalitarian society that Merton describes above, the sort of totalitarian society the public school has become, we find it increasingly difficult to accurately name the reality we experience around us. We may "know what occurs," as poet William Stafford says, "but not recognize the fact." We become filled with resentment at the abusive authority that controls our lives, we complain bitterly or bite our lips and serve stoically, but either way remain servile, for we accept the "automatic forces" that push us around as a given in an inalterable reality. We soon fall into despair, for our deepest belief is that nothing can be done to change the world we live in, to alter the implacable authority we serve. If one of us glimpses the reality behind the benign edifice, points to it and tries to name it accurately, the others label him or her as unreasonable or even crazy. We deny the undeniable, and fall back on comfortable, reasonable, sane explanations for what must be admitted. The dissenter soon feels like Donald Sutherland and his little band of cohorts in the remake of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers," who, clinging desperately to their humanity, must walk around San Francisco pretending to be one of the pod people, the docile, obedient masses already colonized by alien forces. In the film, these few human survivors discover that they must stay awake, for the aliens get you in your sleep, wed you to a pod, take you over body, mind, and soul. It is important that we stay awake too, but it is so hard to stay awake among the sleepwalkers, so hard to keep the image of the totalitarian reality around us clear. But as William Stafford wrote, "it is important that awake people be awake, or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep...the darkness around us is deep." (136)

When we hear the word totalitarian, we picture goose-stepping brown shirts in hobnailed boots chanting "Heil Hitler," merciless KGB operatives sending innocents off to Siberia, or tanks rolling over students in Tienamen Square, not the smiling elementary school teacher with pretty pictures on her bulletin board and a pet gerbil in her room or the friendly old math teacher staying after school to help students with their algebra. So I take a risk here when I label the compulsory public education system totalitarian, but I'm not in the mood for mincing words. It plays rough with us; why should we be gentle with it?

Even so, it did not come easily to me to use the word totalitarian to describe our schools (or our society), nor do I have an easy time not wavering from what I know while I am there for eight hours each day. I may be having a good day with my classes; I may see a teacher giving an engaging lecture to a fairly attentive class, a cluster of kids laughing together in the hall or taking part in an enthusiastic discussion of a book, or I may hear a lively choral practice and say to myself, "Maybe you're wrong, maybe it's just you, maybe this place isn't so bad after all." But, then I remind myself that all of these sorts of positive things went on in Hitler's Germany and in the U.S.S.R., and go on in China today. Human beings are resilient; we make the best of bad situations. Men and women make good friends and laugh heartily in prison too, read good books, sing, paint, and love on death row, but that does not make these humane, democratic places.

Our schools are not humane, democratic places either. They are not only totalitarian in themselves but are in fact the primary training apparatus for the creation of and continual reproduction of a larger totalitarian state. Remember that the most effective totalitarian regime is one that can successfully maintain a benign face, that can exert total control while maintaining a semblance of true democracy and freedom.

What Merton realized through his own practice of solitude was that in our materialistic society our hearts and minds are "enslaved by automatism" through depriving us of personal solitude. What he warns us of is a spiritual deprivation, a warning that "there is not much use talking to men about God and love if they are not able to listen." (xi) This is not a new warning; it is in fact the same one that Thoreau sounded one hundred and fifty years ago in *Walden*. It is no coincidence that the life of the spirit and the life of the soul are not discussed in school, are in fact perceived as being prohibited topics. We are uncomfortable with the language of the soul and of spirit, for these languages require an inner ear, one formed in the crucible of silent reflection, through the habit of looking within and the deep experience of our own psychological multiplicity. This sort of experience does not come to us easily living as we do at the tail end of four hundred years of ever deepening reductionism. We can no longer speak intelligently of our own dreams, the rich primal effusion of our souls, but are fluent in the language of Monday Night Football and weekly sitcom. We are functionally deaf, dumb, and blind in the other world that exists above and below this one, handicaps that are an intentional byproduct of our schooling. In this essay, which admittedly follows an oblique rather than linear trajectory, I will look more closely at two interrelated ways by which public school handicaps us. The first is the stifling of inquiry, the second the deprivation of solitude.

Ask Me No Questions

Schooling, as it is practiced, is totalitarian because by teaching us to submit unquestioningly to "automatic forces" it systematically destroys our individuality, integrity, and humanity. Rather than serving to protect those human qualities of "clean, positive tenderness, love, honor, loyalty, and the capacity to remember," that the great American writer Richard Wright claimed must be "fostered, won, struggled and suffered for, preserved in ritual from one generation to another," school is hastening their disappearance.(43) This task of the preservation of our humanity and individuality, of our capacity for love and for self-determination is, I believe, the true goal of education.

Our nation's proclaimed educational goal is instead the production of an educated work force prepared to compete in the competitive global marketplace. However, if a well-educated workforce were really wanted, I believe that one could be readily produced. That we have not produced one (a fact that does not need documentation in light of the continuous stream of reports on our underachieving American students) is because well-educated people are a threat to totalitarian reality. Well-educated people have the nagging habit of purposeful thought. They recognize the inevitability of conflict in society and of the need for political struggle to resolve it; they ask hard questions and look for answers. But one of the primary missions of public education is to teach us to stop asking thought-provoking questions. A couple of connected stories might serve well here to demonstrate how a questioning attitude is discouraged.

I heard the following story about question-asking at a superintendent's conference day, a bi-annual event that reminds us teachers, lest we forget, just how little power we have in our world of work. This is done by putting us in the role of students for the day through forcing us to attend tedious, in-service training workshops, usually led by former teachers, who have found a better way to milk the system. Teachers, incidentally, respond to this coercion, in a manner identical to their students. A few "good kids," who work at staying engaged with the program, answer and ask polite questions. The majority maintain a semblance of attentiveness while drifting off behind blank, amiable expressions. A cadre of "rebels" read or correct papers hidden in their laps, or sit in the back and sneakily wisecrack for each other's amusement.

This workshop presenter was more entertaining than most; he was in fact a moderately talented standup comic with an inspirational message to convey to teachers about avoiding teacher burnout. Near the end of his presentation he told this story, which he had been told by an older first grade teacher who had attended one of his workshops. The story takes place on the first day of a new school year, the first day of full-day class for students, who last year had attended half-day kindergarten. The morning went smoothly ending with the teacher reading a story to her class. As she closed the storybook she said, "You listened very nicely children; now, get your lunch boxes and quietly form a line at the door, and we will go to the lunchroom." The children complied except for one little fellow who had put his jacket on and gathered his things together, obviously preparing to go home for the day. She went over to him and said, "No Johnny, we're not going home yet; we have lunch now and then we come back here for the second half of the school day." Little Johnny looked up at her with big brown eyes and asked, "Who signed me up for this shit?"

Our would-be comedian used this story, which always gets a big laugh, as a cute example of a teacher not getting rattled by the "little things." Once, she said, she would have overreacted, dragged the little tyke down to the office, screaming all the way, but now, older and more mellow, she just calmly told him to take off his coat, get ready for lunch, and that they would talk about his language later. I think our presenter, like Jim in *Huckleberry Finn* hearing the story of King Solomon and the disputed child, missed the whole point. This story isn't cute, it's a tragedy. The boy asked a crucial question, albeit in a crude form, and behind it, if we think for a moment, are many other questions that deserve to be answered: What happened to my freedom? Why can't I do what I want to do? Why do I have to do what you tell me to do? Who are the faceless forces, behind the benign one, that are stealing my life?

Public school students, if we ever allow them to speak their minds and listen to them for a few moments, continue to ask these same questions in one form or another for the next twelve years. Why do I have to read this book; I hate it? Why can't we read books that we choose? Why do I have to take math that I'm never going to use? Why can't I sit where I want to sit, next to whom I want to sit? Why can't we leave the building when we don't have classes? Why is this person allowed if he/she doesn't like kids? If this sort of questioning makes you uncomfortable, even irritated, if your tendency is to come up short and simply respond with some version of the flip answer, "Because we know better than you what's good for you," then I suggest that the real source of your irritation is that you may have given up asking such vital questions about your own life.

If you don't remember this being done to you, it may be because it was accomplished through humiliation and belittling, which are painful and which we would often rather forget. The process of humiliation is right there in our story of little Johnny. Johnny feels righteous indignation at his imprisonment, which now must extend to a full day. No one has asked him what he would like to do with his time, which up until now he has spent in being an active explorer and eager self-directed learner in the world. So he asks a great question: "Who is doing this to me?" But he doesn't even get a direct version of Ulysses' answer to Polyphemous: "No man did this to you," but rather gets stonewalled. And the message behind the stonewalling is clear. Behind the teacher's sweet, "Get ready for lunch," is the clear, unspoken threat, "Listen, Buster, we don't even have to dignify your question with an answer; you will just do what we say because we are bigger than you, and, if you don't do what we say, we will come down on you like a ton of bricks." And, in this position, who could little Johnny or any of us turn to for help?

The habit of tacit surrender taught in school does not end when we graduate. For an example of how this early silencing continues to work in our later lives I don't even have to leave the auditorium where we sat enduring this fellow's routine. (Incidentally we all had to sit through precisely the same program a month or so later at our next conference day, which took place at a neighboring school. I guess they wanted to make sure we got the message about powerlessness. One of the reasons that teachers so resent these conference days is that we are all desperately in need of time to work in our rooms when the kids are not there, to plan lessons, to grade papers, to do our own work in our discipline, to work with our colleagues. On conference days instead of being given time, we have our short leashes jerked, and are reminded to heel. I have never learned one useful thing at a superintendent's conference day and am positive that even if I had spent those days reading novels or writing poetry they would have helped me far more at being an engaged, energetic and effective teacher.)

On this particular conference day I was stewing in my resentment and being one of the "bad kids." I sat toward the back of the auditorium doing a not-very-good job of hiding the sports section of the *New York Times* which I was reading in my lap. Suddenly our presenter, who was a pace-the-floor-while-he-talked type, was standing in front of me regaling me for my inattentiveness. "Reading the paper? I come all the way from Vermont. I'm working my ass off here, and you're reading the paper!" He was of course oblivious to the colossal rudeness of his gesture, for having worked as a teacher, he was practiced at the arts of humiliation and sarcasm, at forgetting that no one had signed themselves up for this shit. But I was practiced at being a student, and my principal was sitting in the seat in front of mine, so as everyone craned their neck to see who got caught, I meekly put away my paper without a whimper.

Later as I worked to wash away the lingering sting of embarrassment clinging to me after such a belittling, after I had run through a string of puerile or witty blasphemous retorts I might have made, after fantasies of standing up and popping the fool in the mouth, I realized that what I really wanted to do was ask him some questions. His program had focused on the things teachers could do to keep from burning out in the face of the immense, acknowledged stress of our jobs. They were self-help suggestions like eating properly, exercising regularly, and not sweating the little things. I wanted to ask this fellow why his program for dealing with stress put all the responsibility back on the teacher and never questioned the sources of that stress. Yes we should make sure we get enough protein during the day, but might we also question why we have so little say in how the school is run? Isn't a major source of stress in our work lives the fact that we are so thoroughly discounted by the institutions we work for?

I wanted to ask all sorts of interesting questions but of course held my tongue, for I knew well the pedagogical commandment, "Thou shalt not ask real questions." Real questions tend to turn into a line of questioning; the spirit of real inquiry might lead to critical thinking, to bringing the dialectical method to bear on the school, to tearing down the entire bureaucratic edifice that the schooling devil hides behind. So I didn't get up on my hind legs and bark but in best beaten-cur fashion, recognizing the futility of fighting a man with a club, I lay down to lick my wounds in quiet servility and resentment. Do you see how this training in not asking real questions operates in all our lives? What would happen to the vast profitable system of corporate materialism if we started asking questions like the following?

- Why has the corporate tax rate in the U.S. dropped precipitously while the budget deficit has grown astronomically?
- Why is there so much unemployment and corporate downsizing when the country is awash in capital?
- Why have the rich been getting richer while the real wages of working people have continued to fall?
- Why do we buy $100 sneakers made in third world sweatshops for slave wages, while ghetto youth here, who can not find jobs, are targeted by advertisers to covet the same sneakers?
- Why are politicians making noise attacking low ticket programs like public broadcasting and the NEH while corporate subsidization (welfare) runs rampant?
- In a world with limited resources, why is our economy based on selling us products that are designed to wear out quickly or become instantly obsolete?
- If the burning of fossil fuels is threatening our very existence, why is everyone still driving their own car and why is public policy still structured to keep it that way?
- Why is there no news on our local TV news and not much on network coverage either?
- Why do we have political campaigns based on photo-ops, sound bites, and TV ads rather than on substantive discussions of issues?
- Is this still a democracy if no one bothers to vote because there are no meaningful choices?

I could go on forever, but you've probably got the idea. We are trained at school to not ask questions and to defer to experts who know better than we do what is right. We were never trained to think, so it is easier not to trouble our minds with complex issues. Easier to pop another beer and tune in to Sportscenter or read the latest poop on Dennis Rodman or Frank and Cathy Lee.

This is a belittling process, one designed to keep us feeling small and insignificant everywhere in our lives. And nowhere is this belittling more obvious than in the world of work, for which our school experience prepares us well. Take teachers for example, who like to think of ourselves as "professionals." In truth, we have no real responsibility or power over anything that matters. "Experts" have already decided how many days of school there will be, with how many hours of seat time and in what subjects. Experts have already designed the tests that we must train our students to pass. We could not design, in conjunction with a student and his or her parents, an alternative program that met his or her needs. We are not supposed to step outside the narrow curricular paths, much less the tightly structured school day. What if we, teacher, student, and parents together, determined that a student would be better served by sometimes doing independent study rather than by being in class? We can't make changes and we don't ask real questions like the following: What educational purpose is served by grading and ranking our students? Why does everyone have to stay on the same timetable when we know that everyone learns at a different pace? Why does everyone have to take pretty much the same subjects when people have radically different interests and needs? Is there something about school that systematically breeds the boredom, apathy, and short attention spans that we blame our students for having? Why are we evaluated primarily on how well we control our classes rather than how well we teach them?

I suggested earlier that the stifling of inquiry and the deprivation of solitude were related. Think of solitude as a breeding ground for inquiry. Solitude is necessary for the maintenance of our individual boundaries without which we tend to merge with people and things around us. When we are in a merged state, we can easily lose track of what we need to own in any situation and what belongs to others. Lost in a misty world of shadow and projection we fall prey to defensiveness and depression. We lack the groundedness and clarity necessary to inquiry.

The Crucible of Solitude

It might be helpful to first review what Merton had to say about the relation of totalitarianism to deprivation of solitude. Merton suggested that a society became totalitarian when its members were no longer treated like persons but rather as "numbers," "mechanical units," or "cogs in a machine." Moreover, Merton claimed that "to be a person implies responsibility and freedom," that we lose "true humanity," when we become "submerged in a mass of impersonal human beings being pushed around by automatic forces." ("Automatic" suggests to me forces that we no longer question.) What is unique here and what I find most interesting in Merton's analysis is his contention that the way to deprive people of their humanity, to take away their "capacity for self-determination," to get them to surrender to automatic forces rather than question them, is to deprive them of their "inviolable personal solitude." It is my contention that the public school is a machine designed to not only violate the personal solitude of students but to also train them to forget that they need solitude, indeed to make them uncomfortable with it.

One of the unwritten rules of school is "Thou shalt not be alone." Students are to be under close adult supervision for the entire day. Ideally they are to never be out of sight of adult eyes. All space in school buildings is common space; no space is provided for anyone to be alone for any length of time. Buildings are designed to avoid nooks and crannies where someone might find privacy. Students must obtain passes to go unaccompanied to anywhere in the building. They have to sign in and out, listing both time of departure and time of return. Bathroom visits are supposed to be limited to approximately three minutes. (When I first came to my district, there were not even doors on the boys' room toilet stalls.) Teachers are instructed to never leave a class, or even individual students, unsupervised in their rooms. During lunch time when students are allowed out of the building for perhaps forty minutes, teachers patrol the halls to make sure no one gets in and wanders unsupervised through them. Although there are valid security and legal concerns behind this massive distrust of students, what I am interested in are the messages that these policies convey to our children.

Another unwritten rule of the school is, "Thou shalt always be busy." The day is closely regulated by clocks and bells. One class follows on another with just three minute intervals between to pass quickly through the halls. Punishments are meted out for tardiness. Within classes, or even in study hall, the rule is keep them occupied. My first principal, a man whose methods of close control of everything and everyone were greatly admired by both teachers and other administrators, told us that we should plan for bell to bell instruction. We should have something ready for them to start on the instant they entered the room, so there was no opportunity for distraction, and we were to leave no dead air time at the end. They must be engaged right up to the final bell. Study halls must be supervised the same way. Supervising teachers were not supposed to do their own work or read but rather were to walk around seeing to it that each student "had work in front of them." No one was allowed to lower his or her head to the desk to rest, or to even just sit quietly.

Teachers were also instructed to give homework in every subject every night. Homework, which is now routinely given even in the lower elementary grades, extends the school's control over the student's time into the home. Parents are instructed to get involved with their child's education by providing close supervision at home when the children are out of sight of the intrusive teachers. Guilt is a powerful motivator—a good parent will make sure homework is done before students watch TV or play. A recent letter to parents in my district's newsletter suggested that parents of secondary students allow them no more than a five-minute break every forty-five minutes. The ostensible message is that academics come first, but does that hold up under close scrutiny? Are these even sound educational methods? What is the accumulated effect of all this close supervision and busyness in the lives of our children?

I would suggest, first of all, that the maximum-coverage, pack-it-all-in, nonstop busyness method of instruction is an educational fraud. We do not learn anything useful from sitting passively and being bombarded with a nonstop barrage of disassociated information. Active engagement is a necessary component of learning; by this I mean real interaction with and exploration of the environment. For instance, setting up and conducting real experiments rather than reading about or doing laboratory repetitions of old ones. Active engagement in learning requires desire and depends on self-motivation, but motivation is drained out of our children early by all of the coercion, mistrust, and over-management that they face each day. Moreover, even active engagement in and of itself is not enough; learning also requires time for reflection.

The learner needs quiet time to think about what he or she is doing, time to ask and answer questions. Why do things happen the way that they do? What do they mean? How do they connect to what I already know? What do I need to do next? Reflective time is necessary to know ourselves as independent learners, to get to know who we are and what we want, to know where we leave off and others begin. Without reflective time we are condemned to living an unexamined life, the one that is reportedly not worth living. When Merton suggests that the violation of personal solitude leads to a loss of integrity he is right on target. Integrity begins with the Latin root *teg*, a variation of tag, to touch, whence the Latin word integer, which means untouched or whole, so to have integrity means in a sense to be untouched or whole.

School is an efficient machine for shattering individual integrity, for leaving nothing in its path untouched or whole. It accomplishes this through its intrusiveness, its ruthless insistence that you have no time left in the day that is yours, no space, inner or outer, in which to retreat from the authorities who are now running your life. School destroys integrity through non-stop instruction (from the Latin verb *struere* which means to pile up). Unsought information, assorted noncontextual facts, are piled unbidden on children until their curiosity, their native love of learning, is crushed. The self-directed learner, the truly critical thinker needs a broad attention span to be able to hold focus on an issue or idea, to sustain thought, and to follow the helix of an idea up and down its recursive path. School destroys our attention span through its harried, frenetic pace of activity. Unit follows upon unit, subject upon subject, no time to digest what we just learned, must move on, more to cover, always more to cover. The incessant bells set the pace. We may be having a vibrant discussion, you may be entranced by the story we are reading, you may be lost in deep thought, making a marvelous connection but when the bell sounds it all must grind to a halt, for we must move on. Teachers continually bemoan students' short attention spans, failing to see that we not only taught them to have short attention spans but that we, also products of public education, are also attention-span-deprived. What wonderful learning might occur if we could spend the entire day with one class on one lesson, allowing time for the slow building of interest, for fantastic tangential leaps of association, for the natural flow from engagement to reflection, from purposefulness to playfulness and back again. But this will not happen, for we are locked into an agenda and a schedule which we as learners had no hand in producing. Teachers love to blame the students' short attention spans on television, but the frenzied, quick-cut pace of MTV, advertising, and action movies might be more properly seen as products of the short attention spans of public-schooled minds rather than as the producers of those short attention spans.

The end product of this process of devaluation and degradation, this destruction of wholeness or integrity is a human being who is radically split, mind from body, from soul, from spirit. The genius of modern western corporate totalitarianism is that it controls people by keeping them stuck inside their heads while simultaneously destroying their aptitude for serious, sustained thought. School feeds the head only, operating on the fallacy that an educated person is one who walks around with a head stuffed full of facts. The body is treated as a machine; the heart as a pump; the soul as a non-entity. Spirit is regulated to pep rallies. No wonder the kids so often fervently pursue the only spirit offered them by the culture, that which is contained in bottle or bong. To deprive persons of access to the soul is to deprive them of personhood and their humanity.

William Butler Yeats, in "Sailing to Byzantium", writes that "An aged man is a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick, unless / Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing." We are becoming a society made up entirely of tattered coats upon sticks, for without soul to forge experience from the flow of events, life loses all meaning, and without meaning, it becomes meanness. Without the imaginative workings of soul, life in this world is flattened, reduced to deadening social science and statistics. Love and work, the twin founts of joy in life, are reduced to relationships and jobs, sources of stress that we struggle to cope with through self- help programs and pharmacology. Great art, the "Monuments of its own magnificence," that are the soul's only "singing school," according to Yeats, go begging for an audience, while we flock to the Super Bowl, beer in hand. Grief and sorrow, the great dark teachers in life, are forgotten, replaced by stress which we accept as an inevitable by-product of modern life that cannot be avoided, only managed. Without soul, life becomes stress management.

Soul is the great connector. Through the imaginative workings of soul we become entangled in the great metaphorical web of existence that links us to all life, to the earth, and to the cosmos. The great Sufi poet Rumi tells us that "the soul is here for its own joy;" it does not feed on facts but on mystery—"Mysteries are not to be solved. The eye goes blind when it only wants to see why." (Bly, *Rag* 371) Our schools are systematically blinding us to mystery, to our humanity. And, stripped of our humanity we become resentful, hate-filled, servile cogs in a totalitarian machine, for there is no sense in questioning the blind workings of a machine. Is there a Wizard of Oz behind the curtain, or is this thing guided by Adam Smith's "invisible hand"? The answer does not matter, for we sense that if we even pause to think about it we may get caught up and crushed by the mammoth inexorable gears. Better to just keep moving; never mind moratoriums or your inviolable solitude.

I paint a pretty bleak picture here, and would not feel right leaving us here in this "valley of ashes," without offering a few guesses at what might be a path out. The school does not exist in a vacuum. Contrary to an oft-made assertion, it is not really separate from the "real world," but is rather quite seamlessly connected to it. Therefore, the process of transforming the school or education, if it is to be real, must also be a conscious attempt to transform society. In suggesting a direction out of this malaise, I return to Merton, who suggests that,

> No amount of technological progress will cure the hatred that eats away the vitals of materialistic society like a spiritual cancer. The only cure is, and must always be, spiritual. (xi)

This means that we will not turn education around in any meaningful way by putting every student in front of a PC or by seeing to it that every twelve-year-old knows how to sign on to the Internet. In fact our headlong rush into cyberspace, our nonstop push to develop faster and more powerful telecommunications technology might be seen as an attempt to fill the spiritual void left in our lives by the loss of integrity, the loss of soul and meaning in modern life. But the soul is not interested in speed; we will have to slow down if we want our souls to catch up with us. So as a first step toward restoration of integrity to education, I would suggest that we need to slow down. By "we," I mean teachers, parents, any adults who are involved with the education of children. We must remember that we can only teach what we ourselves are; we cannot hope to help children to grow up whole if we do not first look to the restoration of our own integrity. We cannot restore imagination to education if ours is not working.

I do not make this recommendation as an expert practiced in the art of solitude but rather as a pilgrim on the path who struggles mightily with my habits of busyness and distraction, with the habit of giving myself and my own inviolable space up too readily for the perceived needs of others. In fact, I realized in the course of writing this essay that the drive to write it was coming right out of my ongoing struggle to claim my inviolable solitude. We are always teaching or preaching what we ourselves need to learn. Our awareness of this and of all our previously unconscious drives and motivations grows as we slow down and take up a soul practice, and we must have this awareness if we want to teach well. Soul practice puts us in touch with our own deepest, most intense longings, and as the 15th-century Indian poet Kabir tells us, "When the Guest is being searched for, it is the intensity of the longing that does all the work." I believe that the best teachers will be those who are, as Kabir calls them, "slaves of that intensity," (Bly, *Kabir* 25) rather than slaves to their own unconscious projections and the automatic forces of society.

If all of this seems frivolous to you, if it sounds like more self-indulgent navel-gazing while the schools continue their decline, if you think we need to be talking about raising standards, or getting troublemakers out of the schools, or authentic assessment or vouchers, or whatever the new reform buzz is, then I would suggest to you that although these things may be good ideas (we have always had good reform ideas), they will change nothing, for nothing will change until we change ourselves, because we are the totalitarian state as long as we continue to embody its practices. All of that other reform stuff is so much talk, talk that Rumi says "is like stamping new coins," that "pile up, while the real work is done outside by someone digging in the ground." (Bly, *Rag* 371) The real work, soul work, the restoration of our inviolable solitudes, is not some airy-fairy new-age practice that leads us out of this world to some lonely mountain top. It is a "digging in the ground," dark earthwork that brings us squarely up against all of the stony impediments within us. But we must do this worm work, this work of breaking up the heavy clay, of making of ourselves the rich loam that is needed for new life to put down firm roots. Soul work leads us through our own darkness right into the world's darkness, where we need to be to care for the soul of our community, for the soul of the world.

As to the actual practices of education, as a teacher, I can only say that they change as we change; as we slow down, our classes slow down. As we begin to allow ourselves to dwell on the difficult questions, to face the darkness that we have had a hand in creating, we begin to be able to bear our students' questions. As we listen better to our souls, we listen better to our students. As we better know our needs and how to meet them, we learn to see theirs and to respond to them. As we remember what really matters, our "curriculum" is transformed. We move from instruction, piling on, to education, drawing out. Busyness slips away gradually from our classroom; we see that it is enough sometimes to just work side by side with our students on our own projects. Discipline plans for the classroom are replaced by self-disciplined hard work. We might find ourselves moving to older texts, toward sharing the ancient wisdom of our own tradition with our students, who are starving for lack of it.

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HAS HIGHER EDUCATION ABANDONED ITS STUDENTS?

by William H. Willimon

A chaplain at Duke University, assigned the task of looking into the relationship between students' academic and social lives, says yes, we have abandoned students. In an effort to give students their freedom, he explains, we have neglected to give them their roots.

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It is 2 A. M. I am standing next to a Duke University public safety officer on the quad amid a crowd of exuberant students who are watching embers die in a bonfire. The fire, fueled by a couple of benches dragged from various locations on campus, has been extinguished by the safety officers. During the waning hours of this night I talked with a number of students, most of whom were inebriated. I accompanied an officer as he broke up two fraternity parties for violating noise restrictions. We escorted four football players out of a party where they were not wanted. We interviewed a student who had been chased back to his room by lead-pipe-swinging community hooligans. Then we answered an anonymous complaint that some one was "beating up his girlfriend in the room next door." By the time we arrived, no one wanted to talk. We left.

An argument ensues between a young public safety officer and a couple of students. One of the students, obviously intoxicated, curses.

"Don't talk like that," says the officer. "That's no way to talk to people. Besides, the chaplain is here."

"What chaplain?" asks the student.

"The preacher. From the chapel," says the officer.

The student fixes his unsteady gaze on me. He straightened himself up and indignantly asks, "If you're a preacher, what the hell are you doing out this late on a Saturday night?"

Not a bad question, that one. Why am I standing in subfreezing temperatures as Saturday becomes Sunday? Why am I standing here, with people like this, on a night like this?

I'm Only The Chaplain—What Can I Do About This?

A short time ago I had been summoned to the office of the president. There I encountered the provost, the vice president for student affairs, and the president. I of course thought what you would have thought in similar circumstances: I am about to be fired. But President Brodie told me he was increasingly concerned about student life at Duke—about alcohol abuse, residential life, students' personal safety, social activities, fraternities, and sports, particularly have these expressions of student life helped or hindered the school's academic mission.

I'm only the chaplain, I thought. What can I do about all that?

Perceiving a gap between students' academic pursuits and their life after dark and on weekends, President Brodie asked me to listen to the students, to gather information on the relationship between their social and academic activities, and to report my findings.

As providence would have it, the day after my project began, Duke alumnus and professor-novelist Reynolds Price, in a Founders' Day speech in Duke Chapel, delivered a broadside in which he challenged his audience to "stand at a bus stop at noon rush hour; roam the reading rooms of the libraries in the midst of the term and the panic of exams. Last, eat lunch in a dining hall and note the subjects of conversation." Listeners would hear one sentence more than any other: "I can't believe how drunk I was last night."

A senior told me that when he arrived at Duke, "I quickly found myself caught up in the fraternity rush, in the keg scene. I changed my wardrobe, my hairstyle to suit the image I was trying to adopt. Then, when I went home over the holiday break, it hit me. The conversation around my family dinner table was better than any conversation I had had all semester at Duke. You see, my family loves to talk and debate around the table. I said to myself, 'This isn't you. What are you doing? You want something else.' So I decided then and there that I would have to move off campus if I were to have the intellectual life I wanted."

Then he said something that lodged in my mind for the next few months. "Duke students say, 'We work hard and we play hard'—but do we think hard? Are we really developing the critical thinking skills we need?" He and some other students decided to start a "critical thinking group" in which they would debate, research and reflect on current issues on and off campus.

"We work hard and we play hard. But do we think hard?" In her 1987 book *Campus Life*, a history of undergraduate culture on American campuses, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz predicted that students entering college in the 1990s would bring with them "an assertive independence" and "heightened consciences." These students, children of the college rebels of the 1960s, would be a new generation of college rebel; they would want to learn and they would believe in academic accomplishment but be free of the mindless grade chasing that consumed students in the 1980s. Horowitz predicted that these students would soon be "transcending the tired plots of the past to create new scenarios."

Horowitz's predictions are unfulfilled. Instead, students seem to believe that the university is merely a step on the way to law school a necessary evil to be endured before Wall Street. They are here because they want power—as defined in this society's conventional terms—not because they want Duke to change or themselves to be changed for the better. Why?

Students Need Us To Be More Than Onlookers

Most students it seems believe that "academic" applies only to what one does in a classroom a few hours per week. Ironically the faculty have the same perception and take little responsibility for anything that goes on outside the classroom. After class the students are left to the "student-life administrator," a university professional who takes care of all aspects of student life beyond the classroom.

The faculty assume that they have no responsibility for student life other than to attend to the students' brains: in all other areas, students are left either to their own devices or to those in the role of "student life professional." I believe that faculty must recover their care for other aspects of students' lives, that they must question the neat separation they have made between the academic and the social the intellectual and the physical, the classroom and the dorm. In my report I told the faculty that we would do well to ponder questions like, What conditions shaped your own intellectual development? Who changed you and how?

It may be possible for a generation to move into adulthood with a minimum of adult interaction but let the record show that we are the first culture to try it. Most societies have known that it is crucially important to recognize young adults as apprentice adults, as those who need to look over the shoulders of adults and thereby get all the clues they can for adulthood. A first-year student from a small town in North Carolina spoke of himself as "floating" since his arrival at Duke, as not really being engaged by his studies. One night a popular professor spent four hours in the new student's dormitory commons discussing various matters, particularly race relations in America. The professor was African

American, unlike most of the students. When the new student asserted that he had overcome his earlier racist feelings and was able to accept black people, the professor challenged him by asking who his three best friends were on campus. Who had he gone to the beach with over fall break?

"It really hit me," said the student. "My actions did not match my ideals. I decided that I wanted more of an education than I was getting. I therefore intentionally went out and made contact with a couple of black students. I am determined to overcome my past."

Such is the potential of personal interaction between faculty and students. Enlightenment notions of education have conditioned us to step back from ideas, to view them and those who hold them "objectively." Thus we turn specifics into generalities and particularities into abstractions. Philosophers have spoken of the development in modernity of the "onlooker consciousness" whereby we are taught to assume the stance of the professional tourist, just passing through, never really engaging, never settling down anywhere long.

We have structured the modern university in such a way that the chances of faculty's befriending students are slim. When asked why they had never invited a student to share a meal with them, some faculty even cited fears about being accused of sexual harassment. Detachment is the ruling mode. Forgetting the etymology of the term professor as "someone who professes something," we are more inclined as faculty to say "the data show..." than "I have found ..." or "I believe that...." Classes and curricula are structured so that faculty and students will be as much strangers to one another when they leave the university as when they arrived.

In the last few years our rationale for our behavior as faculty and administrators has been to say that we are disengaged from our students' lives because we "trust them," we "give them responsibility," or we "allow them to be adults." This is a rather thin rationalization for the simple fact that we have abandoned them. We use the students to finance our writing and research, as a base from which to promote ourselves within our professional guilds and disciplines.

In an extended conversation with the women's studies faculty, I was told that the primary reason that twelve women students transferred from Duke the year before was the "anti-intellectual climate" at the university. (In my own observation far more women than men criticize this aspect of the school.) The women's studies professors believe there is far too little appreciation for the learning that occurs outside the classroom. While the students receive a certain education outside the classroom it may not be one that we want to support.

"What could we do better to process in the class room the events outside the classroom?" these faculty asked. "The students crave to have more of us." Undergraduate education in America could be improved if more attention were given to the emotional and social development of students. This is an area that faculty could influence and not relegate only to student affairs staff.

Abandonment aggravates our struggle with alcohol on campus. I first attributed our students' alcohol abuse to simple rowdiness ant regarded it as an example of typical adolescent exuberance. But I found that alcohol appears to fulfill certain "social functions" beyond the simple narcotic effect of taking away adolescent social anxiety.

Alcohol serves to demarcate certain social groups. When I asked African American students why they had chosen to live together on central campus I expected to hear them say that they prefer an Afrocentric environment Instead they cited alcohol abuse in the dorms. The vomit on the floor during the entire weekend and the condition of the restrooms after a night of partying send a signal: "This is an exclusive, white drinking club. You are not wanted here."

Women students are also threatened by this alcoholic environment. One woman challenged me, "You ought to come over and spend a night in our dorm and listen to the sort of things that I have to listen to every weekend night. It's scary." I did. It was.

I do not say that college drinking is worse today than yesterday. However, the consequences of alcohol abuse are no longer considered socially unacceptable. Furthermore increasing numbers of us are realizing that a number of contributing factors over the last decades have greatly aggravated the alcohol problem: few classes on Friday and before noon on Monday, too much discretionary time on students' hands, a sad perversion of the women's movement in which binge drinking by women is seen as a mark of "liberation," and other factors.

What Can We Do? We're Not Their Parents

Those who work with students frequently recall the *in loco parentis* (in place of parents) policy the alleged modus operandi of colleges and universities until at least the early 1960s. I remember a conversation I had with the student affairs committee during a meeting some of us cynically referred to as "damage control," the mopping-up action after a weekend of student carousing and vandalizing. A newcomer to the scene, I blurted out "Can't some thing be done about this? Don't you think it is a shame that these people come to us with such potential and then waste themselves with alcohol?"

A dean of students responded, "But what can we do? After all we are not their parents."

"We are not their parents," I agreed, "but could we at least be their older brothers and sisters? Could we be their friends?"

Might the modern university consider playing the role not of substitute parent but of wise friend?

"It is important that we give students their freedom," many respond. "Freedom is developmentally important. We need to treat students like adults, relying on them to make mature decisions for themselves."

But students are not adults. At best a student is in Daniel Levinson's words "a novice adult" (1979). According to him, few students are capable of making their own decisions or thinking for themselves. Leaving them to themselves with no skills for discernment, meager personal experience and a narrow world view, they become the willing victims of the most totalitarian form of government ever devised—namely submission to their peers, obeisance to people just like them. This is not freedom.

How do people grow up and develop social skills and critical thinking ability? Not by exercising some abstract "freedom" but rather by observing, imitating, confronting and arguing with those who have more experience in life. Neil Postman (1992) urges all teachers no matter what their subject to regard themselves as historians: those who initiate the young into adulthood by sharing with them what humanity has learned thus far. Unfortunately most faculty are absent from campus especially during evening hours and weekends when students are most socially active. Even during lunch hours faculty eat in their offices or in the restricted faculty commons. Thus opportunities for students to observe their elders are virtually nonexistent.

Could it not be argued that there is an interesting relationship between good teaching and good parenting? Rejecting *in loco parentis* has rendered the university a sterilized community without the "diversity" we say we crave. Diversity the ability to be different, to enjoy one's differences to stand alone against the crowd if needed, to exercise bold thought and judgment may be in great part fostered by the values that our elders demonstrate in their lives and teaching. Alexis de Tocqueville noted that Americans created a culture in which everyone was free to say whatever he wanted—yet unfortunately everyone chose to say the same thing.

Freedom and individuality are complex. What conditions help to create free people?

A person who has spent many years counseling students on our campus noted that a better empirical case could be made for supporting in loco parentis during the 1990s than during the 1950s. Increasing numbers of our students have been inadequately parented. They arrive on campus having missed important aspects of human development: interaction and conflict with their parents over values. They were left to their own devices. These are not people yearning to be left alone by adults. In my first-year seminar I ask students to write a short "personal history paper." This past year out of the sixteen papers I received, seven mentioned that the most determinative, life-changing event for them was their parents' divorce. Only one paper mentioned a father. It was as if these young people were orphans.

One of my explanations for the current state of universities is that they are being run by people my age. They are being administered by people who were students in the 1960s when their supreme value was an abstract notion of freedom. I'll admit it. I was one of those student activists who fought for and achieved the abolition of rules and structures and who removed faculty and administrative interference in student life. Now that we are in positions of power we run the university much as we wanted it to be administered when we were students.

Unfortunately many of us "tenured radicals" fail to realize that we are dealing with a very different generation of students—those whose developmental and educational agendas are very different from the ones we had when we were students. Today's students do not seem obsessed by the search for freedom. They seem much more interested in the search for roots, stability, order and identity. Many of them are convinced that modern life is chaotic, essentially unmanageable. Perhaps one of the causes of their passivity is that they have no memory, no real awareness of history so they have lost hope that anything they decide or do can possibly impact the shape of the world.

We cannot reinstitute *in loco parentis*. Yet might it be possible for the university to act as a wise friend? Loneliness appears to be built into our present system. What can we do at the modern university to nurture friendship between adults and those who are becoming adults, to explore friendship as the normative means of education? Aristotle noted in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that friendship "holds states together." Today's university (a misnamed institution if ever there was one) is neither unified or coherent. We desperately need, as a glue to join parts into a whole, some commonly affirmed goals and means. Although Aristotle was skeptical that true friendship could occur among the young —because "their lives are guided by emotion and they pursue most intensely what they find pleasant and what the moment brings," so they "become friends quickly and just as quickly cease to be friends"— he did believe that friendship was one of the supreme intellectual virtues to be cultivated. "Time and familiarity are requires" for Aristotelian friendship.

Might it be possible for the university to become a place where people are allowed the time and the space for friendship to develop, where the virtues required of friends are cultivated and where we all become more adept in the art of relating to one another not as strangers, clients, customers, or caregivers, but as friends? This approach can be applied to the problem of alcohol abuse. "Friends don't let friends drive and drink," says the advertising slogan. The thought is not trite. What might it mean if we viewed alcohol use, for example, not as an issue of rules and regulation, as solely an administrative responsibility, but as an issue related to friendship?

Hannah Arendt noted that, missing the "political" implications of friendship, "W e are wont to see friendship solely as a phenomenon of intimacy, in which the friends open their hearts to each other unmolested by the world and its demands." She challenges this view as a modern perversion, defending the "Aristotelian idea that friendship is the basis of the polis." Arendt recalls the relationship between friendship and conversation:

> For the Greeks the essence of friendship consisted in discourse. They held that only the constant interchange of talk united citizens in a polis...The Greeks called this humanness which is achieved in the discourse of friendship *philanthropia*, "love of man," since it manifests itself in a readiness to share the world with other men. Its opposite, *misanthropy*, means simply that the misanthrope finds no one with whom he cares to share the world, that he regards nobody as worthy of rejoicing with him in the world and nature and the cosmos. [pp. 24-25]

After my experience with the students, sharing their lives after dark and on weekends, I feel we are at a turn in the road in American higher education and in student life. The time has come to recover the classical ideas of higher education, to reclaim a sense of the campus as a environment meant to foster friendship between the generations and to recognize the specific educational needs of this particular generation of students. I dream of a university where mature adults eagerly share with those on their way to maturity the discourse of friendship.

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This article by Chaplain Willimon first appeared in About Campus, *September-October, 1997, and was sent to us by contributor John Lawry.*

RID-A-HIM-or:
Why Are So Many Boys Given Drugs in School?

CHAPTER TWO
by Chris Mercogliano

Chris Mercogliano is co-director of the Free School, a twenty-nine year-old independent, inner-city alternative school in Albany, NY. His book, Making It Up As We Go Along, the Story of the Albany Free School *(Heinemann, 1998), came out in May. He is currently working on* this new, and potentially revolutionary book*—which he has graciously allowed us to serialize in ΣΚΟΛΕ as it appears.*

Ian's mother called me about a third of the way into the school year, not long after, at the strong suggestion of his teacher, she had begun adding another ingredient to the chemical cocktail that she gave her nine-year-old son every morning before school. At this point he was up to 30 mg a day of Ritalin and it still wasn't "working." Ian's teacher continued to complain that he wouldn't stay in his seat and also that his mind frequently wandered from the assigned task.

This wasn't the first time Petra had received "strong suggestions" from school officials. When Ian entered school at age 5 in a small town near the Canadian border, it was almost immediately "suggested" that he be put on Ritalin because, like John, he was exhibiting all of the usual "symptoms" of ADD. Petra didn't at all like the idea of drugging her child, and said as much to his teacher and the principal. The school's response: Do it or else we will file charges of child neglect against you with the state Child Protective Service.

Nothing strikes fear into the heart of a rural, working-class mother like the threat of having her child taken away by the local authorities, and so Petra gave in and began administering the Ritalin. When she moved here to the Capital District this past year, she hoped that the schools might be more progressive-minded and permit Ian to come off of the drug.

Quite to the contrary. Ian's new school was even more intolerant of his restlessness, physical and mental, and proposed that Petra begin giving Ian Clonidine to augment the "effectiveness" of the Ritalin. Petra, worn down by the prior threats and by the constant flow of negative reports about her son, gave in without a fight this time. Within days she received word from the teacher that, thanks to the new medication, Ian was a different child now. Here was the first good news this frustrated mother had heard from his schools in a long time, and she eagerly looked forward to the upcoming "Parents in School Day" so that she could see for herself.

When the much-awaited day arrived and Petra sat observing from the back of Ian's classroom, she was nearly struck dumb with horror. The boy slumping heavily in her son's seat was not her son at all. According to her report to me on the telephone, "He was like a zombie, just completely zoned out."

Petra decided then and there to find another option for Ian. She had somehow heard about us through the grapevine and was on the phone with me the next day.

I told Petra, as I always tell such parents, that Ian would have to come off the drugs entirely before he could try out the Free School. Our no medications policy causes many parents to take pause and think the decision over for a few days. But not Petra.

"Do you really mean it?" she blurted out, incredulous.

"Absolutely," I replied. "We find that kids simply don't need it here."

Petra made arrangements to bring Ian in the next morning.

* * * *

Ian's first day begins much like John's, except that he arrives with a ravenous appetite.

"I can't remember the last time I saw him eat like this," his mother remarks with obvious relief as we watch him wolf down a second bagel with cream cheese.

The next thing we know, Ian is bouncing on the mini-tramp next to the big mattress, still chewing his last bite of breakfast.

Observing Ian, one is immediately drawn to his eyes. Their expression is intense, electric, indicating perhaps an overload of energy in this region. The dark circles underneath them suggest that he doesn't always sleep very well. His complexion is soft and fair, his skin a little paler than I would like to see this early in the season. When Ian takes off his pull-over hat first thing in the morning, the static electricity sends his medium-length brown hair every which way, giving him a comical look that doesn't seem to faze him in the least. According to the principal of his previous school, who uttered these disparaging words to Petra in their parting conversation, "Ian walks to a different drum beat than the other kids. Perhaps he just doesn't belong here." (So much for the principal being your pal.)

I, on the other hand, wouldn't call Ian's beat "different;" it's just faster than most. He seems to do everything at a very high rate of speed. Today, for instance. he completes his first woodshop project in under ten minutes. It's a tray for his mother and the elaborate paint job he gives it takes no more than another seven, including washing up the brushes. There is nothing sloppy about the finished product either. Petra is delighted to receive it at three o'clock.

Ten-year-old Ian is highly articulate; he has an extensive vocabulary and reads at well above his grade level. A devotee of the children's interactive fantasy game, Dungeons and Dragons—or "D and D" as he calls it—he regularly reads novels like *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* and *Camelot*.

At the same time, Ian's social immaturity is readily apparent. He spends a large portion of his first several days upstairs with the little ones, where, understandably, he feels more secure. Unlike John, Ian has arrived in November, and it's always hard to be the only new kid. Furthermore, his prior school experience was no bed of roses. But I sense there might be more to it; Ian feels to me like a fundamentally frightened child. One can only wonder whether it is other people he is afraid of, or his own impulses—or perhaps some combination of the two. It strikes me that Ian's apparent inability to pay attention for very long, which was such an issue in his previous schools, is an expression of his being on the run from someone or something, and not a symptom of some organic disorder.

Ian alternates between hanging out alone and busying himself with our hybrid supply of toys and games, and playing pied piper to the four- and five-year-olds. They are in seventh heaven whenever an older kid showers them with such attention, and their instant glee is wonderfully confirming in return. The preschool teachers tell Ian they will allow him to hang out there as long as he isn't too rough or domineering.

After Ian has been with us for a few days, I find myself having an informal chat with him as he enjoys his usual post-breakfast climb on the upstairs jungle gym. Ian has reached the age where it isn't as easy for boys to forge a close connection with adults who are relative strangers. While I suspect he would love to attach himself to me the way John has done from the outset, thus far he has remained at a respectful distance from all of the teachers, continuing to prefer the company of the preschoolers instead. We exchange general pleasantries and discuss his favorite movies and video games for awhile, but what I am particularly interested in hearing is how he's feeling now that he is no longer taking any drugs. I'm wondering if he's experiencing any ill effects from their sudden withdrawal from his system, and so I ask him if he has noticed any difference thus far.

Ian ponders the question from his perch on the horizontal climbing ladder. Somewhat to my surprise, he answers, "I think I feel a little calmer."

Though I'm wary of him feeling invaded, I can't help but press a little further. The Free School is anything but a calm environment. "Why do you think that is?" I inquire.

After a thoughtful pause, he comes back with an equally unexpected response: "Because here I am free."

* * * *

My intuition about Ian's fearfulness is confirmed when he accompanies a group consisting mostly of my second- and third-graders on an expedition to a local goat dairy to breed one of our does. I heard Strawberry yelling plaintively out in the barnyard when I got up this morning, a sure sign that she is in heat.

With Strawberry on Lakota's leash, we all pile into the school van for the forty-minute drive out into the country. I start the van and attempt to back out into the street, which is on a steep hillside sloping down toward the Hudson River four blocks away. No such luck. The rear tires spin hopelessly on a small patch of ice. Muttering a few expletives under my breath, I slouch down in the driver's seat and ponder my next move. Goats only stay in heat for twelve to eighteen hours, so it is imperative that we get Strawberry to her assignation with the buck as soon as possible. While I'm mulling over my options, Ian cuts through my private deliberations with a question of his own. "Chris, can I go back to school now? I don't want to do this anymore." There is urgency in his voice and an anxious set to his brow.

I try to reassure him, responding in the calmest voice I can muster, "It's okay, Ian. It'll just take me a minute to get the van unstuck and then we'll be on our way."

I suddenly remember that I have a bucket of rock salt in my garage. A shovelful behind each rear wheel instantly sets us free, enabling me to keep my optimistic promise. But when I reach the city limits, I realize that in my haste I have forgotten the directions. It having been a year since my last trip to the dairy, the finer details are a little hazy in my mind. I make the mistake of mentioning this out loud to Kenny, the ten-year-old boy sitting next to me in the "navigator's seat" who accompanied me the last time we made this same trip. We agree that, together, we'll be able to recognize the way as we go along.

But Ian has overheard our conversation and calls forward from one of the middle seats, "Are we lost, Chris? I think I want to go back to school."

I tell him again that everything's fine and we continue on into the late-autumn countryside. It occurs to me to distract Ian by suggesting to him that he watch for deer, which are often on the move this time of year. It's their breeding season, too. He doesn't see any deer, but the search keeps him occupied until I make my first wrong turn, when the whole scene repeats itself.

Only this time it's, "We're really lost now, aren't we, Chris? Come on; I want to go back to school. Now!"

I decide to ignore his rising angst. At this point I figure my best bet is simply to get to the goat farm as fast as possible. I confer with Kenny instead and we quickly locate the right road. We manage to arrive without further incident and Ian's fears soon dissolve into the excitement of delivering Strawberry to her appointed rounds with motherhood.

The high level of insecurity Ian is carrying inside of him has not escaped my notice. Here is a boy who has already been severely traumatized.

* * * *

At the parent conference that always concludes a prospective new student's week-long trial visit, I learn of one of the sources of Ian's deep-seated fear. The story goes like this:

When Ian was about a year old, his young mother and father separated permanently. Six months later, the dad found himself in a relationship with a woman who also happened to be a reborn Christian. This new partner, according to Petra, was extremely suspicious of Petra's form of spirituality, which includes certain goddess and wiccan practices. She managed to convince Ian's dad that Petra was a Satan worshipper and that Ian was in great danger. So the dad kidnapped Ian one day and spirited him away to a neighboring state so that it would be more difficult for Petra to get him back again. After nearly a year of legal wrangling in the family courts of both states, Petra finally managed to regain custody of her son. But she said he was a different child when she did. He was "nervous" now, afraid to go places, or to be left alone.

I tell Petra that one way we will help Ian with his fear will be by exposing him to it in small doses, as on the recent field trip. This is the standard approach to desensitizing children who are allergic. It also lessens the grip of phobias. More importantly, I go on to say, just being in an environment where there is no external pressure on Ian to "succeed" or "fit in" will slowly enable him to be more at ease, both with himself and with others.

There is nothing naive about Petra. In her early thirties, she wears a forthright expression on her face at all times. I find I appreciate people like her who speak their minds freely. Petra's life until now has been such that she's been around the block a few times. She reveals that she has met a nice man in the area, with whom she's now living, and that she is pregnant with her second child.

The other important point I want to get across to Petra here is that anger and rage very often accompany fear in the psyche. While Ian has kept his angry feelings pretty much under wraps thus far, it is important for his mother to know that he is likely to begin coming out with them in school once he begins to feel "at home" with us. Nothing has gone terribly wrong for him during his visit—no fights or major conflicts—and so this bridge has yet to be crossed. Petra needs to understand that the heart of the Free School's approach to fostering children's growth, especially kids like Ian who haven't had an easy time of it, is to help them learn to deal with their emotional selves.

In order to sound out now how she might react if one day Ian were to bring home a dramatic story of one kind or another, I tell her I would be amazed if Ian, given his history, wasn't sitting on a load of unexpressed feelings. We've learned over the years, sometimes the hard way, that it's always better to have this discussion sooner rather than later, to prevent any big surprises down the road.

Petra confirms my intuition that Ian is an angry, as well as a fearful child. She assures me that, after all she's been through with him, it would take a lot to upset her, and that she is relieved to know he is in an environment where people care more about emotional well-being than test scores and compliant behavior.

When I ask Petra for her assessment of Ian since he began coming to the Free School, her eyes well up with tears and she says, "My God, you've given me back my son."

* * * *

Ian's first forays downstairs into the elementary section of the school aren't terribly rewarding, at least in social terms. On the surface he appears to have little sense of how to interact with other kids his age. He should, technically speaking, be in Dave's fourth, fifth and sixth grade class—his date of birth places him right in the middle of that group—but thus far he is showing little interest in any of their classes, projects or discussions. And his attempts at hanging out with them seem to always leave him feeling like the odd man out. Kids at this pre-adolescent stage have often already begun to adopt the tribal social customs of teenagehood, meaning that Ian certainly has a challenge in front of him if he wants to become a real part of Dave's group.

To add to the degree of difficulty, Kenny is probably the dominant boy in the ten-member class. And Kenny is a lot like Ian, except that he is African-American and has grown up in the school's impoverished South End neighborhood. Kenny might be on Ritalin now if he were still attending public school, but somehow he managed to convince his mother to let him come here before the school psychologist at his last school could get her hands, and her prescription pad, on him. And somehow Kenny managed to talk his mother into letting him return this year, even though he has done precious little in the way of legitimate schoolwork since he signed on with us.

Like Ian, Kenny is extremely active and energetic. And profoundly frightened, too. This ten-going-on-nineteen-year-old's fear is rooted in the violence, the betrayals, and the unpredictability of twentieth century ghetto life. He has seen too much already. Though Kenny would never admit to being so afraid, I can readily see the fear he silently carries overtake him, even when the gestalt is as trivial as his not immediately knowing the right answer in a little, low pressure math game that I sometimes play with the kids, especially the ones who don't respond well to the workbook format. At moments like this, his typically brash expression vanishes into thin air and his eyes dart around as though they're scanning the room for the nearest exit.

Kenny doesn't participate in many organized classroom activities either, but he is an accepted member of the group, and in many ways a leader—in the style of a lone wolf. His "turf" is what we call the "downstairs big room," a large, rough and ready play space which is the home of the wrestling mat and two large trunks filled with dress-up costumes. Kenny tends to spend a good deal of his time in here.

Today Kenny is more excited than usual, agitated almost, and Dave and I suspect the reason has to do with Ian's sudden appearance on the scene. In the afternoon a group of kids is horsing around on the mat in the big room, and Kenny, playing the role of protective big brother, is highly critical of Ian's attempt to join in on the action.

"Cut it out, Ian. You keep grabbing Austin around his neck," Kenny says crossly. Austin is only seven and Kenny is ostensibly concerned about his safety.

"I did not! I did not!" repeats Ian.

"Yes you did," Kenny returns, his volume rising. "I was looking right at you when you did it."

Round two is only a few minutes away. This time Ian has wrestled eight-year-old Sarah, who is a head shorter than him, to the mat.

"You better get off of her, Ian," warns Kenny. "You got no business picking on a little girl like that. Do it again and I'm gonna kick your ass."

Ian's eyes momentarily flare with anger. It's no mystery what he's thinking. But, while Ian and Kenny are approximately equal in size, Kenny wears the scars of many a street battle. Ian wouldn't last thirty seconds in a fight with him. And Ian is nobody's fool. To try to save face he says, "Why don't you mind your own business, Kenny? I wasn't hurting her."

And so it goes for the remainder of the afternoon. Kenny wants to leave no doubt in Ian's mind as to who is the boss of the big room.

* * * *

For the next several days Ian drifts through the school like a man without a country, more or less splitting his time between the upstairs and the downstairs. He lets it be known that he likes to draw, and so I make crayons and a supply of large sheets of paper available to him. One morning he does several interesting drawings in rapid succession. The last in the series is a nearly lifesize self-portrait. It has a cubist feel to it and the figure is split by a thick vertical line from head to toe. Each half is a different color. Scrawled across the top of the drawing are the words, "I'm crazy."

Unfortunately, Kenny's earlier concerns about Ian's rough treatment of smaller kids turn out to be more than a bit prophetic. Nancy, Dave, and I begin receiving reports from the preschool teachers about Ian becoming too overbearing with their little ones upstairs. At one point we hear that he put his hands around the neck of a five-year-old boy and shook him when he wouldn't go along with Ian's plan for a castle they were building together in the block corner. Apparently this wasn't the first time, so Dave takes Ian aside and explains to him gently but firmly that if it happens again, he will lose the privilege of spending time in the preschool. Dave isn't encouraged when he gets back a defensive blast of argument and denial from his newest student.

As fate would have it, it is Dave himself who witnesses Ian's next transgression. After lunch the following day, Ian is rough-housing on the mattress upstairs with a band of four- and five-year olds. Dave has just finished eating at the teachers' table about ten feet away when he sees Ian grab another boy around the neck and begin to shake him vigorously. Ordinarily soft-spoken, Dave suddenly barks out like a drill sergeant: "IAN! I told you you weren't to do that ever again. Now go down to our classroom and stay put until I get there."

There's no argument this time. Dave clears his place and heads downstairs to deal with Ian. Deciding it's time for some stronger medicine, he tells Ian that for the next three days he will be confined to their classroom, where all the kids are his age and size.

The following morning I need to ask Dave about something, and I can't help but laugh out loud when I walk into his room. Dave and Ian are alone, the teacher in an armchair with a look of bewilderment on his face, the student at the chalkboard busily coating his palms with different colors of chalk and filling the board with handprints. A strong odor of chalk dust lingers in the air.

Still chuckling, I say to Dave, "Getting a little taste of public school teaching, eh? Imagine having to deal with this kind of captivity behavior every day."

"That's okay; I'd rather not," he groans.

I direct my next question to Ian. "Brings back memories, doesn't it?"

"Yeah," he answers in a tone similar to Dave's.

Feeling sympathetic toward their sorry lot—the other kids have long since fled this dismal scene—I decide to sit down and stay a while. I want to make sure Ian understands that the keys to his freedom are in his own hands.

"What do you think, Ian?" I ask. "Are you capable of controlling yourself around the little kids, or should the upstairs teachers just tell you to stay away?"

"I promise I won't hurt them any more. Now can I get outta here?" he pleads.

"This isn't about promises," Dave interjects. "When the three days are up, the upstairs teachers and I will decide whether or not we want to trust you again. In the meantime you're gonna park yourself in here so that you get the seriousness of what you've done."

Eventually Ian is able to drop some of his defensiveness. On the second day of his "sentence," he and Dave have a good, heart-to-heart talk about Ian's problem. Ian admits that he has trouble managing his temper sometimes, and that he forgets how much bigger he is than the preschoolers. He enters into an agreement with Dave that he will never again, under any circumstances, grab a smaller child the way he did. Sensing that Ian is genuinely repentant and ready to make a growth step in this area, Dave elects to give Ian a "day off for good behavior." I don't know who is more relieved that the confinement is over.

* * * *

Almost universally, the "Ritalin kids" I have dealt with over the years all have difficulty accepting limits on their behavior. It's an issue at school, and as we often learn from their parents, it is also an issue—sometimes larger, sometimes smaller—at home. The question then becomes: What is the best way to respond to these sometimes willful, uncooperative, and antisocial children, so that they don't drive us, or themselves (or both) crazy?

It seems to me the wrong turn so many conventional schools and so many parents at home take is that they rely too heavily on standardized discipline. They become mired in the rut of pre-set rules and punishments. Or they fall back habitually on techniques such as the "time-out room" and the "time-out chair." Even these humane and "enlightened" means of setting limits quickly lose their effectiveness when they are overused.

The trouble I see with most, if not all, fixed disciplinary measures is that they tend to deliver a sense of punitiveness, reinforcing anger and resentment rather than the learning of new behaviors. In one local high school, for instance, over two-thirds of the students were suspended last year at least once, a figure that is rising annually. Clearly something isn't working. Or should they just get rid of all the students?

Meanwhile, the kids who tend to drive parents and teachers nuts invariably are creative characters, practically begging to be dealt in an equally creative manner in return. Our first level response is to try to stay out of the business of behavioral management. We prefer, when at all possible, to let kids learn from their own mistakes. For example, kids who forget to bring their wet bathing suits home after our weekly trip to the public bath are greeted the next time with that same moldy, damp rag wrapped in plastic. If they want to swim badly enough, then that's what they will have to wear. They seldom repeat the error. Or we let the kids set their own limits on each other's behavior, as in the earlier interaction between John and Janine. Finally, in a case such as Ian's where the call for adult intervention is obvious, we set up natural consequences, ones which follow logically from the out-of-bounds behavior. Since Ian was mistreating smaller children, he was told he couldn't be around them for a while, and also that he would have to make a commitment to changing his ways before he could enjoy the liberty of playing in the preschool again.

Perhaps most importantly, we don't attempt to monitor our students' every move. In a sense we want them to have the space to make mistakes because mistakes contain within them important opportunities for self-discovery and development. After he had picked on one smaller kid too many, Ian was presented with the chance to reflect on his actions, to take a look inside. Middle childhood is certainly not too soon for a boy to begin engaging in self-examination. He got to see the anger for himself. And in the end Ian was given the chance to choose whether or not he wanted to try handling his anger in a different way in the future.

Even though Ian's misdeed was a very serious one, our response was not to punish him, but to stop him in his tracks, to send him a message that what he had done was absolutely intolerable because it was hurtful to others. Dave's decision to confine Ian to the classroom for three days was not the Free School's standard penalty for bullying; he didn't get the idea out of some handbook on discipline. Dave was simply following his instincts as to how best to deal with an individual boy in a particular situation. He made sure to follow up his initial hot anger with a caring presence, because the idea wasn't to shame or penalize Ian, thereby driving his hostility further underground, but to give him a chance to reestablish the trust upon which the freedom in our school is based. Dave's decision to let Ian go was based entirely on Ian's response to the question: "Can I trust you to act appropriately around the little kids, to remember how much bigger you are than them, and to control your temper?" When the answer was yes, Dave had to rely on his intuition again to determine whether that yes was sufficiently genuine. The idea behind letting Ian off a day early was to end the affair on a positive note and give Ian a boost in the right direction.

Like it or not, humans are aggressive beings. Some more than others, of course. Our modern, technological culture seems to head only farther and farther in the direction of bottling aggression up. The dilemma is that when aggressive energy is contained too tightly it becomes pressurized, and if there is no release valve, then the pressure increases until it explodes outward catastrophically. Someone usually gets hurt. That's why at the Free School we have a punching bag hanging on both floors of the building, and why we continually foster physicality in all of its many forms: wrestling, tumbling, running, chasing, climbing, jumping, baseball, football, basketball, and dance. And we don't restrict such activities to two or three circumscribed "physical education" periods per week. Children need more of an outlet than that, especially the country's growing number of "Ritalin kids." In Ian's case, the idea isn't to try to control and contain his aggressive impulses, to pacify—or passivize—him, but to help him learn how to find the right channels for his abundant energy and creativity.

Ritalin is control in a bottle, plain and simple. Insidiously effective, it is only one step removed from the following well-kept secret: In the early 70s, the federal government was ready to sponsor a "violence prevention initiative" among "potentially violent" inner city youths in which selected candidates were to undergo an operation to remove the "violence" center from their brains. When word of this Mengelian experiment leaked out to an outraged public, it was quickly canceled, only to resurface two decades later in a more socially acceptable form. This time the same target group was to be administered Ritalin, supposedly to "control" the same brain center and thus solve the problem of rising levels of urban crime and violence. Thankfully, once again the initiative was uncovered by Peter and Ginger Breggin, whose book, *The War Against Children*, sparked inquiries by a group of concerned citizens—and NIH quickly canned the research.

In the meantime the war on American schoolchildren continues unabated. More and more kids are being drugged every day as our society increasingly turns toward Ritalin, et al, as the solution to the management of the children it has deemed to be misfits and ne'er-do-wells. The question that continues to nag at me—the reason I felt moved to write this book—is why is this acceptable?

Perhaps one answer is to be found in the preface to the new edition of *The Mind's Fate* by Dr. Robert Coles. According to Dr. Coles, a professor of child psychiatry at Harvard University and one of the most distinguished students of human behavior of the twentieth century, the fields of clinical psychology and psychiatry have already begun to enter a brave new world where the only therapy is drug therapy. Therapists in training today, writes Coles, are no longer required to undergo their own analysis, always a fundamental requirement in the past. Instead, trainees are taught how to affix the right psychiatric label to the client's symptoms, and then to match the right label with the right "medication." If this approach has become standard practice in the entire mental health field, then it is little wonder that our schools are handing out biopsychiatric drugs like candy.

But does that make it okay?

* * * *

After his release, Ian, a little gun-shy perhaps, chooses to remain downstairs. This morning he flits in and out of my open-to-all-ages math class like a hummingbird at a hanging basket of nasturtiums. On his first flight in he requests an arithmetic workbook (from a programmed, self-teaching series that I'm fond of and the kids seem to like). I issue him a copy and he proceeds to do a few pages in rapid succession. Then he's off again, as suddenly as he arrived. When I call after him to put his book away, he yells over his shoulder, "Don't worry, I'm coming back to do some more." True to his word, Ian returns several times, and by the end of the session he has probably accomplished as much as many of the others. Since the students are all proceeding independently at their own pace, his transient learning style poses no problem as long as it doesn't disturb the rest of the group, which it didn't seem to do today. When I check his hastily completed work at the end of the class, I find no mistakes.

The following morning Ian brings in his Dungeons and Dragons materials: an elaborate game board, reference books, and a slew of plastic swords, shields, and body armor. Before long, my entire group of second- and third-graders is crowded around him, asking if they can play. Lex, our new twenty-three-year-old teacher, who was once a D & D devotee himself, helps them get the ball rolling. Swords and shields are distributed, roles are assigned, and then Lex quietly disappears once things are more or less established. The game proceeds with amazingly little arguing and the kids are reluctant to stop when lunch is served.

The action resumes immediately following the noon meal. To my total surprise, Kenny is now one of the players. A stranger to the game, he willingly accepts Ian's knowledgeable direction and quickly gets the hang of it. What a sight! East meets West. Today will mark a significant turning point in their relationship.

D & D remains the rage for a week or more, with Ian as maestro all the while. One morning he comes into my algebra class and asks to borrow all of the chairs we aren't using. When I ask what for, he answers that he's holding a class on D & D in the big room. Mildly irked by the intrusion, I nonetheless tell him by all means to go ahead. Twenty minutes later, I slip out of my class and into his, only to find him seated in front of a group of six students lecturing on the various medieval creatures and entities around which the game revolves. He has their rapt attention. The class doesn't break up for at least another twenty minutes.

When Ian finally reemerges in the preschool, he appears to have a new role in mind—that of entertainer. He asks Missy if he can break out the large supply of puppets she keeps on hand.

Fresh from his teaching success downstairs, he has decided he wants to put on puppet shows for the little kids. Missy is only too happy to oblige, and before anyone quite realizes what's happening, Ian has converted her kindergarten work table into a makeshift puppet theater. Then he ad-libs his way through a zany rendition of slapstick that he improvises on the spot. The kindergarten corner fills with laughter, and word of the performance quickly spreads throughout the upstairs. Act II plays to a standing room only crowd. Before long, audience members become actors and Ian seems perfectly pleased with the circus he has set in motion. He welcomes all comers and there is very little squabbling over who gets which puppet. A grand time is had by all. Suddenly Missy can be heard saying about the youngster who only a week ago had been terrorizing her charges, "What a gift he is!"

Ian's interest in puppetry leads to the kindling of a friendship between him and Andrew, our newest intern, who works as a professional clown in his spare time. The son of eastern European dissidents, Andrew, like Ian, definitely marches to his own drum beat. The two hit it off squarely, spending hours together over the next several days writing out elaborate scripts for future puppet productions. Andrew is only nineteen and has been with us just two weeks, so I think he is relieved to have already established such a rapport with one of the students. This means that Ian is making yet another valuable contribution to his new-found community.

* * * *

Yes, here is the very same boy who less than three months ago had been found by his horrified mother slumped at his school desk, driven into a drug-induced stupor by adults who had no use for his gift of imagination, no compassion for his vulnerability and severely damaged sense of self.

Which is not to say that we have "saved" Ian by any means. He still has a long, bumpy road ahead of him, a lot of wrong turns yet to make. His vehicle is already dented and scratched, a hubcap missing, the shock absorbers badly worn from potholes previously encountered. The engine idle is still set a little bit too fast, and the trunk is loaded down with old emotional baggage not all belonging to himself. But his sense of direction seems true enough, and there seems to be sufficient reason to believe he has within him all that he will need to complete a successful passage through this life, though no one—least of all he—knows exactly where he's headed.

Who would ever dream of consigning such a hopeful boy as this to the junk yard at so early a stage in the journey?

Only madmen and fools.

CHAPTER THREE

John manages to regain his woodshop privileges and immediately begins working on a battleship of his own. Aside from hammering his thumb, he completes the project without mishap. John is probably the only person on earth to whom his creation actually looks like a battleship, but then that's not really the point, is it? What is important here is that he made it without being monitored, and the end result was pleasing to himself.

In the meantime there's been other trouble brewing. John has started picking on a classmate who is only about half his size. Thankfully, John seems to have a knack for choosing just the right target to best assist him with his education. Sean, a diminutive French Canadian boy, refuses to play the victim even for a moment. With two older brothers at home, he learned long ago not to put up with any abuse from bigger boys.

Sean does what kids usually do in our school if they are being mistreated: he tells John in a loud, clear voice, "STOP IT!"

When John persists, Sean takes the next appropriate step after someone violates the "stop rule." He calls a council meeting. Council meetings are our all-purpose democratic decision making plus conflict resolution mechanism all in one. And they are a great way to cure bullies. Sean goes around the downstairs crying out "COUNCIL MEETING!" By prior agreement, everyone stops what they are doing, comes into the big room, and arranges themselves into a large oval. A chairperson is elected. This time it is eight-year-old Abe, a compact, high energy package who does such a capable job of running things that he is frequently chosen over much older candidates. Meetings operate according to Roberts' Rules of Order and begin with the person who convened the meeting stating the problem or concern. His small, dark eyes shooting daggers at John, Sean recounts three instances where John has either hit him or forcibly taken something away.

John is given the chance to tell his side of the story but has nothing to say in his own defense. He just sits and stares glumly into his lap. Immediately, young hands fly up around the room and John is hit with a barrage of indignant queries:

Question: John, why did you do that to Sean?

John: I dunno.
Question: John, do you realize how much bigger you are than him?
John: Yeah.
Question (from an older child this time): Would you like it if I hit you and took your things?
John: Nope.
Question: Well then, why did you do it?
John: I dunno.
Question: Has anyone been treating you this way in school?
John: No.
Question: Does anybody pick on you at home?
John: Sometimes my big brother does.
Question: Do your parents make him stop?
John: Sometimes.

So go what, for John, are several long minutes. Bullying is probably the worst "crime" anyone can commit in our school, and the kids have numerous ways to make it a regrettable act. Peer-level justice can be quite tough. This time, one of the older kids urges Sean to make a motion that the next time John bullies any smaller student in the school, he will be sat on by that child, with the help of five or six other little kids. This idea must have been inspired by the Lilliputians' subduing of Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels*. It is a very effective deterrent.

Sean decides to make the motion, and it is seconded and discussed. The motion passes unanimously—John is too stunned by his sudden exposure to vote against it. For dramatic effect, Nancy suggests to Sean that he choose his potential helpers right now, just in case John should forget and pick on him again. Hands shoot up once more. Sean selects the rest of the kids in his class, along with one of the boys from mine for back-up. Someone asks Sean if he feels that his problem is solved, and when he nods affirmatively, a motion is made to adjourn.

* * * *

George Dennison, who along with his wife, Mabel and some other schoolteachers, started New York City's First Street School for the Lower East Side's throw-away children in the days before Ritalin, had this to say in *The Lives of Children* about the difference between their approach and the public schools':

> But how does a teacher, deprived of the familiar disciplinary routines, maintain order in his classroom? The answer is, he does not. Nor should he. What we call order,

> in this context, does not deserve that name at all; it is not a coherent relationship of parts to a whole, but a suppression of vital differences. Nor does the removal of the suppression lead to chaos, but to cyclical alternations of individual and group interests, of which the former are noisy (though rarely irrational), and the latter quiet. Not that real crises will never occur, or important refusals on the part of the children; but for the most familiar kinds of unruliness, the observation holds. The principle of true order lies within the persons themselves. (page 22)

I am occasionally amazed myself by the orderliness of our council meetings. They stand in stark contrast to normal operating conditions in the school, which often looks like a highly charged molecule, its atoms dancing excitedly about an ever-shifting nucleus—or as an observer once said, "like Grand Central Station at rush hour." This same observer went on to point out that, seen from a camera on the ceiling of that famous railway station, the apparent chaos actually contains a great deal of inherent order. Everyone more or less knows where they are going, and all eventually reach their destinations.

And if you were to spend sufficient time observing John, or Ian, or our other Ritalin kids you have yet to meet, you would see for yourselves that "the principle of true order" indeed lies within them. It generally isn't a neat and tidy kind of order; oftentimes these children don't head in a straight line to their goals. But then again, they are boys, the kind of boys whose behavior, as Natalie Tangier pointed out in *A Strange Malady Called Boyhood*, would have been entirely within acceptable limits in the days of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn.

It is interesting to note that these same kids who were once drugged because they supposedly couldn't keep still in their previous schools have no more trouble here than their "normal" counterparts sitting through even a long, drawn-out council meeting. What's the difference? I'll leave you to answer this question on your own.

As long as conventional schools remain locked into their spirit-deadening control game, where masses of children are directed when, where and how to perform routine cognitive tasks under the guise of education and the threat of punishment, and prevented from interacting with each other in organic ways, the reliance on biopsychiatric drugs, or some other such Orwellian strategy, is inevitable.

And if nothing is to be done about it, then let's at least not deceive ourselves: It is the conventional school model's rigid enforcement of an artificial order that creates the various "disorders" like ADD, and not the other way around.

* * * *

John doesn't wait long before he decides to test the will of the community. In the van on the way back from apple-picking he starts pestering Sean, and when Sean tells him to cut it out, John bops him in the nose with bag of apples. So, immediately upon our arrival at school, Sean sets about carrying out the motion passed at the council meeting he had previously called to address his problem with John. He rounds up his already deputized supporters, and together they confront John, who has begun to play in the big room. The kids take John a bit by surprise and he only puts up a mild struggle as they set him down on the rug as gently as possible. I stand nearby to make sure things don't get out of hand. When John finally wakes up to what is happening, he becomes furious and frightened all at once. He fights like mad to get free, but since there are six kids in all, they have little trouble keeping him safely planted on his back.

As soon as John runs out of steam and quits thrashing, Sean, who is straddled across John's waist with a hand on each of John's shoulders, looks down at him and says, "I just want you to stop bothering me, okay?"

When there's no response, Sean tries again. "Are you going to stop? If you say yes, then we'll get off of you."

This time John's eyes well up with tears, and he says in a soft voice, "All right; I promise I won't do it again."

The kids immediately let John up and everyone goes about their business. It is important here to note that no one other than me was there to watch this process as it unfolded. Confrontations like these should never be allowed to become public spectacles.

The following day I happen to catch a snippet of an interaction between John and Sean in their classroom. The two boys are in the room alone working on a puzzle. Apparently John has started to hassle Sean, and from my classroom I overhear Sean say to him, "Do you want me to sit on you again? If I have to, I will!" I lean out my door just in time to catch through the open doorway of Nancy's room a look of recognition flash across John's face. It's a tough way to learn, but, as stubborn as John is, I think he's starting to get the message.

John has been with us a little more than a week now. Though he continues to do a lot of roaming, he gradually seems to be feeling more at home here. This morning he told Kenny he was going to call a council meeting if Kenny didn't stop teasing him, a sure sign that John is catching on to how the school works. He busies himself in the woodshop for up to an hour at a time, and lately I've noticed him in there with Sean. Together they're building some sort of odd contraption or another. Perhaps there is a potential friendship here. Despite their many physical differences, they have much in common. But I'm not sure John has ever had a real friend outside of his immediate family, meaning that this is yet another crucial learning that will take time.

This afternoon John agonizes over whether to go with me to help press more apples into cider—part of a fund-raising project initiated by the kids in my group and me—or go swimming, which he says he loves, with Nancy. He has even remembered to bring in his suit and towel. John changes his mind at least five times while the two groups prepare to head off in their separate directions. His struggle with his dilemma is almost comical, but Nancy and I manage to contain our laughter and allow him the space to make up his own mind. At the last second, he chooses swimming and goes and has a wonderful time at the pool. When I see John at the end of the day, he seems quite pleased with his decision.

* * * *

Learning to make good choices is such an important prerequisite for leading a good life, and yet so many of today's children have precious little opportunity to practice. The current hyperconcern with "standards" in American education is fast eliminating what scant room there was for choice in the conventional school day. Now the heat is on in the nation's day care centers and nursery schools as well, as they push reading and writing on kids at ever younger ages. Homework, even at this level, is becoming the norm.

In *Dumbing Us Down, the Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling,* John Gatto presents a time analysis of the typical American child's school week. He concludes that after you've added up the hours spent going to, from, and in school, plus homework, plus after-school activities such as music lessons or organized sports, plus meals and time spent watching television, playing video games and online, a young person only has about nine waking hours per week left that belong to him- or herself. The equation varies somewhat according to social class, but the end result is about the same, says Gatto. That's all the time there is in which *they* get to decide what to do, and when and how and why. I agree with John—it's simply not enough.

Unfortunately, in a computerized world children's lives are becoming programmed, too. Whereas when I was a child the majority of the time I spent playing sports consisted of us kids organizing our own ad hoc games, today there is an explosion of adult-organized leagues for every sport imaginable. There are programs for everything under the sun now: before-school programs, after-school programs, special enrichment programs, summer programs, leadership initiative programs (there's an oxymoron for you), and so on into the night. Then, on the other extreme, there are growing numbers of semi-abandoned "latchkey" kids who have far too little decent adult input into their lives, and as a result develop a deep disrespect for all forms of authority. My neighborhood is full of them, and we have one helluva time in the summer when they sometimes run wild in large, lawless packs. This phenomenon seems to grow worse every year.

Also, I watched far less TV when I was a boy—there just wasn't very much that was worth viewing then—and video games and personal computers didn't yet exist. The world was considered a much safer place for children, too, and I was pretty much allowed the run of the city of Washington, DC., where I was born in 1954. Not so anymore. Safety is the name of the game wherever you go today, and kids' lives are becoming severely circumscribed as a result. Even ordinary play has been placed in a tamper-proof package with the current proliferation of commercial play establishments. It's no wonder that more and more children have seemingly excessive amounts of energy, enough to earn them the label "hyperactive" and their parents a trip to the pharmacy.

There's one more ingredient to add to this thickening pot of glue: the parenting style of my generation has turned out to be either far more permissive, or far more managerial than that of my parents' generation, and the trend seems to be ongoing, or even increasing, in the current generation of young mothers and fathers. Most parents, especially middle-class parents, that I know these days are trying hard to be good parents, to do the job correctly, better than their parents did. But there is a hidden cost: all of this parental effort is leaving kids with less and less time and space to work things out for themselves, to learn to manage their own needs and rhythms.

It all adds up to kids making fewer and fewer choices all the time. And while I've never seen a "scientific" study confirming my suspicions, I am convinced there is a correlation between the rise of the programmed childhood, with its lack of risk-taking and choice-making, and the exponential rise in the number of distressed children in our modern, managed society.

* * * *

I finally get to meet John's dad at our post-visit parent conference. There's no mystery where John gets his height from. John Senior is at least 6' 5" tall and played college basketball in his home state of North Carolina. His hand engulfs mine when we greet each other with an introductory handshake.

Many fathers sit stiffly in their chairs and let their partners do the talking in these meetings, but not big John. He leans forward and fires off questions as easily as he used to shoot baseline jumpers. I can tell that he wants to believe in our unorthodox approach to education; the problem is he simply has no point of reference for the large degree of freedom we allow our students, even ones as young as his own first grader. His initial questions echo his wife's earlier worries about whether or not John will be able to master his basic skills when he has the choice to establish his own timetable for learning them.

It's so much easier when parents put their anxiety right out in the open. And it's a godsend when a boy's father elects to be this actively involved in the raising of his son. John Senior, however, was raised in the rural South, meaning that there is very little in common between his image of school and ours. I figure my best bet is to acknowledge this fact right off the bat, and then to talk about the rising amount of fear our society arouses in parents as far as their children's cognitive development is concerned.

My one edge with this intelligent, concerned father is that they have tried the conventional school approach with both of their boys and it hasn't worked well with either of them. Nor, he admits, did it work particularly well for him; if it weren't for his mastery of basketball, he says he probably wouldn't have made it through four years of college. Here Irene adds that by the time she reached high school, she'd had it with the routine and the enforced learning of public schooling. At that juncture she flew into a full-blown rebellion, one from which it took years to recover. Both parents express almost in unison that they don't want their kids to have to go through this painful kind of transition into adulthood. My response: If children are encouraged to belong to themselves now—if their motivation to learn comes from within and not from without, and if the thoughts they think are their own and no one else's—then the chances are good they won't feel compelled to turn their adolescence into a combat zone.

I attempt to reassure John and Irene by recounting some of the high school success stories of recent Free School graduates. I emphasize that because our kids tend to develop such a strong sense of purpose and inner direction, they are better able to roll with the punches should they find themselves in a conventional high school situation. They have built-in "bullshit detectors," a phrase I picked up from a younger friend, and to them teachers are simply fellow humans, each with their own strengths, weaknesses and idiosyncrasies. And for reasons unknown, many seem to have a real savvy for playing the grade game. I've yet to hear of a Free School graduate failing at least to get a GED certificate (some wisely elect to drop out of high school because they end up growing too weary and bored).

Here John Senior returns with an insight of his own: By placing so much emphasis on "building character," as he puts it, we not only prepare kids for future schooling, we also help them get ready for life in the real world. As in my earlier conversations with his wife, I can tell that I haven't entirely erased his doubts, but at least I have managed to spark in him the willingness to give the Free School a shot with his son.

The conversation meanders away from school issues and into matters of home and family. I get the sense that in their case Mom is the "nice guy" and Dad is the disciplinarian who issues the threats and does the spanking. Even though corporal punishment is part and parcel of Southern culture, I express my disapproval as diplomatically as possible, arguing that the anger and resentment it engenders only tends to reinforce the behaviors you're trying to curb. I have already picked up that little John, like Ian, is a frightened child, and the image of him being reprimanded physically by his giant of a dad doesn't sit well with me at all. John Senior replies that he's trying to get away from spanking his kids and that they've begun to experiment with other disciplinary measures, such as sending the boys to their rooms when they misbehave. Still, my impression is that punishment in one form or another is a major ingredient in their family life.

John Senior confides that he's usually exhausted when he returns home from his job delivering refrigerators and often doesn't have much left to give his sons. Irene mentions how she's always after her husband to spend more time with the boys so that she's not carrying the entire attention-giving load. Pregnant with a third child, she has quit her job in order to take it easy and be more available to John and his older brother. Unfortunately, this means family finances will be especially tight for a while.

Before we wrap up, Irene lets drop one last significant piece of information, her realization that the baby on the way is another boy and how sorely disappointed she is. She says she's had it up to here with raising little boys.

* * * *

A few days later, John and Lindsey, one of my second graders, accompany me to the supermarket to buy pectin and canning jar lids for the apple jelly project. John has already helped us pick the wild apples from which we pressed the cider for the jelly, and now he wants to be in on the completion of the process, which is fine with the other kids in my group. They seem to like John, even though he can be so difficult at times.

It's always a grand challenge to take an impulsive child like John shopping. Modern supermarkets contain so many inviting attractions, so many seductively displayed things. Before entering the store, I put my arm gently around his shoulders and explain to him my rules: no running, no wandering off, no grabbing stuff of the shelves, no bugging me to buy him anything. I tell him that I am willing to remind him once or twice, but after that we will simply leave the store without our supplies and return to school. Just to make sure he gets the idea, I help him to visualize the angry mob he will likely be facing if he is the reason we come back empty-handed.

John quickly uses up his allotted reminders:

"Chris, will you buy me some candy? Please!"

"John, what did I say to you about nagging me to buy you something?"

"Oh, yeah."

When we pass by the aisle with the toys and games, John starts to dash off. It's a case of the irresistible force and the immovable object. I call out, "Do you remember what I told you about staying with me in the store?" I'm mildly surprised by his ability to break himself out of the toy trance and return to my side. We double-time it to the canning section, find what we're looking for and zoom back to the check-out counter. I really want John to taste success the first time around.

But I push our luck too far when I decide to make a second stop at the lumber yard next door to the supermarket to pick up a repair part for one of the school's windows. I remind John of my personal store policy and in we go. Things probably would have gone perfectly smoothly if it weren't for the five-minute wait while the clerk tracks down the right hardware. The sight of all those power saws and drills is just too much for John. Finally, when he just won't leave the merchandise alone, I have to resort to gently restraining him while the clerk and I talk over how to repair the window. I should note here I that I refrained from making an issue of John's behavior here for two reasons: First of all, he had no direct connection with the business I was conducting, and secondly, I realized I was stretching him past his limits.

No harm—no foul, as they say in basketball. However, my refusal to let John roam around and examine the tools and gadgets has put him into a sulk. After I pay the bill, he refuses to accompany Lindsey and me out to the car. My own children helped me years ago to discover the futility of getting drawn into power struggles with willful children in crowded stores. I say to John calmly: "I'm going to get in the car and drive back to school. Lunch will be ready and I don't want to miss it."

With that I turn my back on John, who is still leaning against the counter with his arms folded tightly across his chest, and head for the door. Fortunately, the car is parked right out front, so that John can see us open our doors and sit down. While I'm searching my pockets for the keys in slow motion, John suddenly appears by the passenger's side where Lindsey has already seat-belted herself in. Either hunger or the thought of being left behind has momentarily changed his tune.

This blossoming saga isn't over yet. John's foot-dragging has enabled Lindsey to beat him to the coveted front seat. He glowers at her and declares in a voice oozing with entitlement, "Hey girl, that's my seat."

"No it isn't," she replies with a lovely self-assurance. "You had the front seat on the way here, and now I get it on the way back."

Back go the arms across the chest; John is in no mood for fairness. He tells her no way is he going to get in the back seat. After a short pause, he starts to open Lindsey's door with a look of determination that signals his intent to battle her for possession of the seat.

I generally don't care to intervene between kids in their territorial struggles over vehicular seating arrangements, but I, for one, am ravenous and have run out of patience with John's antics. Drastic measures are called for. I shut and lock Lindsey's door and say to him, "I'll give you thirty seconds to think it over, and then, if you don't get in the car, I'm going to leave without you."

Now he glowers at me as I begin my slow, ascending count. At twenty-five I turn the key in the ignition and rev the engine a couple of times for emphasis. Then I announce: "Okay John, time's up; we're leaving now. Hope you find your way home."

Leaning stubbornly against the car parked next to mine, he still refuses to budge. It's a real Mexican stand-off. But not for long—it's time to fight fire with fire. Sending him a determined look of my own, I shift the car into reverse and slowly ease out the clutch. That does it. As soon as John sees the car creeping back out of the parking space he cries out, "Wait for me!" I stop, so that he can open the back door and climb in.

Here, of course, I have broken the cardinal rule of effective limit-setting, which is never to set consequences you're not fully prepared to carry out. Obviously I wasn't going to drive off without John. But a six-year-old's fear of abandonment is almost always stronger than his will, and so I was fairly certain my bluff would have the desired effect. For those of you who might think it unfair to exploit a child's fear in this way, keep in mind that Ritalin kids rarely play by the rules. They need adults around that are a step ahead of their game.

We go one more quick round over his seat belt and head back to school. Spying his still furrowed brow in the rear view mirror, I can tell his petulance isn't quite spent. Sure enough, we haven't gone far before John begins to whine about not occupying the front seat. "It's not fair, Lindsey; I had it first." To which he adds, "You're stupid."

Lindsey wisely refuses to take the bait. After he repeats himself several more times, I can't help but ask, "Does your mother give into you when you treat her this way, John?"

Smiling broadly, he answers, "Yup."

"Well then," I return, " your mother is doing a foolish thing because look at you now; you're six years old and behaving like a big baby because you didn't get your way."

This launches him into a stirring defense of his mom: "She doesn't give in to me. I was just kidding." And then as an afterthought: "Don't call my mother foolish; she's smart."

"I know your mother's very smart, but she's making a big mistake when she gives in to your whining and sulking. It's not good for you."

"I told you she doesn't!" he whines back.

I counter by turning to Lindsey and asking her what she thinks.

Lindsey, who along with her two older sisters was home-schooled until last spring, possesses a wisdom beyond her years. She considers the question carefully and then answers: "I think his mother usually let's him win, because otherwise he wouldn't be acting this way now."

Suddenly John changes the subject: "What are we having for lunch today?"

* * * *

Kids as young as six, or sometimes even younger, are capable of an amazing degree of self-understanding. That's why I chose to engage John in the preceding conversation. I wasn't out to impugn his mother, but to get him to begin looking at the price he pays by trying to manipulate others with his sulking and pouting. John's essence is that of a proud warrior, not a whiner, and I know he knows that. It's not the way he wants to be in the world at all; it's just a typical child strategy that has paid off too often in the past. Irene is, by nature, what we used to call "a soft touch." She wants her boys to be happy and she may always have trouble holding her own in a busy supermarket.

While it never does much good to lecture young children, or to expect them to think and act like little adults, it is entirely appropriate to begin helping them understand the mechanics of their own behavior. They are generally more than willing to learn—provided the information comes from within the context of a caring, respectful relationship. Even though he tries my patience mightily, I genuinely like John. In no way was I trying to insult him any more than I was his mother. Rather, I was holding up a mirror in which he could see himself in a new light, so that he might begin to exercise some choice with regard to his response to the outside stimuli of his life, instead of acting only out of habit. While I was being somewhat critical of his actions, at the time I was communicating a respect for his ability to reconsider them and perhaps do differently in the future.

Herein lies the utter travesty, and the flagrant inhumanity, of drugging children into behavioral submission. It is cowardly; it's a cop-out. It disregards their inborn desire to become whole persons. Given half a chance, the kinds of kids to whom the labels "attention deficit disordered," "hyperactive" and "learning disabled" are currently being applied in such wholesale fashion are more than willing and able to learn, grow, and change without someone altering their basic biochemistry, in many cases against their will. To presume otherwise represents an appalling discount of the human spirit.

COMMENTARY ON RID-A-HIM

by Emanuel Pariser

Here's an e-mail-borne commentary by long-time ΣΚΟΛΕ contributor Em Pariser on the first installment, from our spring issue, of Chris' new book. Em co-leads the outstanding Community School in Camden, Maine, about which (and by whom) we have published many articles.

Hi Mary,

Congratulations to Chris M. I just finished reading his chapter one of *Rid-A-Him*; and it left me feeling and thinking a lot. What greater value could a text have. So, since it is a Saturday, and I don't have to be anywhere except out in the squash patch for a final summer planting—I am indulging my impulse to respond immediately. First off, why did I enjoy the piece? Well theoretically and stylistically and politically I feel like Chris is kin. He overstates things just the way I do, he doesn't like to really piss people off either—and, I can relate to that. He watches carefully, and uses a conversational tone in his work—working from the reality in front of him, to the concepts he is engaging and back again.

The description of John's first days at the Free School is engaging and heartwarming, and raises as many questions as it answers. For instance, how did the girl who sat on him do it so well? How did she manage getting spit on so dispassionately? How would this system of discipline work if the child who was doing the sitting had more of their own agenda involved in it? What would have happened if John had been a physically abused child and he had been sat on? and on and on...it's great because for every answer there is another question, and in that pursuit we circle reality with more and more texture. It also made me think of what it would be like to work with younger kids—since I have worked always with high schoolers who can't be "sat on."

I would recommend to you Chris, that you check out *Culture Against Man*, by Jules Henry, which has a wonderful section on his observations of elementary schools, I believe the section is called "Rome Elementary School" in the late 50's. Henry's analysis is so interesting and stimulating, and right on—about why the culture needs schools to be the way they are that even though it is not an easy read, I still find it breathtaking at least in a mental sort of way. As my mother would say, "it leaves a good taste in my mind"... as your piece does.

Skipping on to what I liked in *Rid-a-Him*, I love the piece on iatrogenic diseases caused by modern education. This could be developed much more completely—maybe you do that in the book as it progresses, but test-phobia, hyperactivity, etc. all might be tied to certain school practices in conjunction with a shifting cultural and family context...after all the factory model is totally unnecessary now that we have no factories in the US (I know this is an overstatement, but you know what I mean). We can't do the analysis of these diseases "scientifically," but we sure could write an interesting piece tracing some of these "dis-eases" to a cause (one of many no doubt) within the schools—especially the "learning disabilities." However, it will always be the tendency of a culture to label its misfits, so that it can avoid looking at itself...changes on a macro level are probably most frequently caused by other changes on a macro level—catastrophes—environmental, economic, sociological, etc. Our work as educators is always on a micro-level, life by life, and my hope there is that in terms of the big-picture we can hit a critical mass at some point; and even that pales as a realizable goal in the flame of a small but real success like the one you experienced with John.

I also liked the line of thinking about separation—how schooling separates, even just in the way subjects are separated, as though the world exists in little separate boxes like science and math and social studies, and then we create a world in which this is true—the world of academics, as our friend Big John [Gatto] points out, a multi-billion dollar industry. There is so much to do though with that idea of separation—there are good separations and bad separations—and ultimately we end up at theological questions which must also be entertained.

Several other thoughts: *Brave New World* and *1984* are really two radically different forms of dictatorship—Orwell is talking about an externally imposed regime, violent, and built on fear. Huxley is talking about an internally imposed regime based on the quenching of desire—through the wonderful world of chemicals. To fight either one is a terrible task, with the second being more difficult I think. I wonder myself a lot about the argument on psychoactive designer drugs. On the one hand I hate them, I hate the biochemical world they imply, I hate the profit motive which creates them...and so forth. And then I end up feeling like a Puritan—if someone is deeply depressed, and suicidal, and they can take a pill which relieves some of their symptoms so that they can work on their life-situation—can I argue with this approach if they choose it? I have too many friends, acquaintances, relatives, who rely on medicines, psychoactive and somatic, to write this all off as godless capitalism, misguided biochemical determinism, and yet the Huxley image haunts me as well. Where does this all begin and where does it end? And I guess this is where it becomes a question of the spirit.

For this moment my stance is that humans have the incredible capacity to create the worlds they live in. If we want to have a biochemical world, it will be one for us. If we want to have a new age world, it will be one. If we want to have a socialist world, it will be one. The crushingly difficult task is the choice, something which no tradition can train us for. I see the human condition as a huge atrium in a building into which there are dozens of doors, you can enter it from chemistry, religion, philosophy, whatever. The door you come into it from shapes the world you go out into. Then there are the eternal truths of "human nature" which the Buddhists do the best to capture—almost all human behavior can be categorized into aversion and desire. Learning to face these two impulses and free oneself of their incredible power is a lifelong task. It's an awesome power we have with our consciousness, and I am delighted that you, Chris, are using yours the way you are.

Write on!

And Chris also sent us this review:

THE WILDEST COLTS MAKE THE BEST HORSES

by John Breeding, Ph.D.
published by Bright Books
Austin, Texas 1996
209 pages (paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

Authors die for the perfect titles for their work. Well, John Breeding has come up with a doozy here—never have I seen a title better sum up a book's essential meaning. Just don't let the author's last name cause you to miss his metaphor. In *The Wildest Colts Make the Best Horses*, Breeding is not referring to our four-legged equine friends, but rather to the estimated two million American children (recently updated to as many as five million) who are assigned such pseudo-psychiatric labels as "hyperactive," "attention deficit disordered" or "learning disabled," and then administered one or more mind-bending, spirit-deadening drugs to render them more submissive and manageable both in school and at home.

Before I go any further, let me state up front that as a teacher of rascals and misfits for twenty-five years, I wholeheartedly agree with Breeding's basic premise and share his horror at what we are doing to our society's wild colts. A glance back through history will quickly confirm that some of our greatest geniuses and leaders were once wild colts themselves. Homeschoolers love to remind us that as children Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison, Albert Schweitzer, Albert Einstein, Pearl Buck, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Agatha Christie accomplished very little of their learning in the classroom. And it was Mahatma Gandhi's admitted ineptitude as a law student and later as a courtroom attorney that forced him to practice law among outcast Indian immigrants in South Africa, thus starting him on the road to one of the most astounding social and political victories in human history.

Yet never were these unforgettable men and women cut from the herd and corralled with psychopharmaceutical drugs, Schedule II controlled substances such as the powerful amphetamine-like stimulant Ritalin, the anti-depressant Prozac, the anti-hypertensive Clonidine, the anti-convulsant Tegretol, and the tranquilizer Mellaril. In this current brave new world for American children, the parameters for what is considered "normal" have been so narrowed that any childhood expressions of wildness virtually guarantee non-conforming kids a lifetime of this kind of "treatment."

Breeding elects to focus mainly on today's most popular designer label for children who don't fit the mold—"Attention Deficit Disorder," or ADD, as it is known in the trade.

Author Breeding makes for a very effective whistle blower because, as a clinical psychologist who could be making a handsome living writing prescriptions for Ritalin, et al, he emphatically repudiates any and every psychopharmaceutical approach to the behavioral management of children.

Instead, he spends the first part of this groundbreaking book questioning the validity of ADD as a medical disorder. He introduces us to the emerging field of "biopsychiatry," to which psychopharmacology owes its current and future success. According to Breeding, the principles of biopsychiatry are as follows:

- Adjustment to society is good.
- Failure to adjust is the result of mental illness.
- Mental illness is a medical disease.
- Mental illness is the result of biological and/or genetic defects.
- Mental illness is incurable.
- Symptoms can be managed primarily by drugs

Breeding's analysis is confirmed by the words of Dr. Robert Coles, who warns in a new preface to *The Mind's Fate* that twenty-first century psychology and psychiatry are going to be entirely based on chemical solutions to psychic distress. Coles, an eminent professor and researcher at Harvard University and author of the now classic *Children in Crisis*, says that we are already witnessing the arrival of a new generation of clinical psychologists and psychotherapists who no longer undergo their own analyses, a fundamental training requirement ever since Sigmund Freud and others invented this new science of the psyche. What current and future generations of mental health care providers will be schooled in instead, according to an alarmed and saddened Coles, is how to correlate the client's "condition" with the proper label, and then how to prescribe the right pharmacological cocktail to keep the symptoms in check. That's it; Huxley's soma here we come.

Where Dr. Thomas Armstrong, who has written extensively on the subject, calls ADD a myth, John Breeding sees it as a metaphor which enables a society that is becoming more and more identified with its corporate/global economy to extend the mechanisms of social control into every home and classroom. Conformity becomes an almost mathematical certainty and our growth-addicted economic system is all but insured the delivery of future generations of compliant consumers and producers.

And it didn't take long, Breeding points out, for the pharmaceutical industry to discover what a gold mine had been opened up when the educational system in the 1960s began to label and segregate the misfits, and its partners in crime, the school "psychologists," started handing out Ritalin like candy. Today the makers of Ritalin and Prozac are reaping untold billions in profits—and market analysts tell us this is only the beginning. I recently learned from a family practice doctor in Syracuse, NY, that researchers at the teaching hospital there are experimenting with Ritalin on three-month-olds. And did you know that the manufacturer of Prozac, which, like the tobacco industry before it, now has American teenagers in its cross-hairs, and is now making its poison available in a variety of flavors? Or that Ciba-Geigy, which produces Ritalin, has given nearly a million dollars to the national ADD "support" group, Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD)? CHADD is currently lobbying Congress to relax FDA controls on Ritalin.

In a chapter on schools, Breeding clearly spells out what I call the "iatrogenic" nature of this supposed new "disease" called ADD. The Prussian-style, factory model of education which was installed in every school in America during the compulsory education movement of the late nineteenth century, values absolute obedience and conformity, not experimentation and independent thought. Echoing John Gatto, who says that it is the schools that are psychopathic, not the kids, Breeding believes the various labels that have been cooked up for kids who are flighty, inattentive to boring and repetitive tasks, loud, impulsive, or aggressive are "a distorted way of describing the effect, not the cause, of a bankrupt philosophy of education."

At the same time, Breeding acknowledges that there are increasing numbers of children and families in this country who are genuinely distressed. Toward this end he devotes the latter two-thirds of this lucidly written book to coaching struggling parents on better, more creative, more caring ways to relate to their kids, especially when they are being difficult. Included in this section are excellent chapters on how to set limits effectively, how to help your kids deal with the impact of popular culture, and how to help them open up and grow emotionally. His solution to so-called attention deficit disorder: Learn to read your children's behavioral signals and give them the positive attention they so urgently need. If you find yourself in over your head, which should not be a cause for guilt or shame since so many of us had ineffective parental models, then don't hesitate to seek out experienced support.

A real family therapist, Breeding knows what he's talking about. His psychological theory is firmly grounded in years of successful practice. So, parents out there, if the "psychiatric police" show up at your door, you don't have to turn your kids over to them. There is another way.

Here's an insightful piece from a new contributor, who teaches at a nearby community college... Thanks, Scott:

THE ARTIST WITHIN

by: Scott M. Hathaway, Instructor, English Department
Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, New York
12180

Only in men's imagination does every truth find an effective and undeniable existence. Imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art as of life.

—Joseph Conrad

From the doorway, I watch my two year old son Noah with curiosity as he creates a dialogue for his Playskool little people and stuffed animals. I watch his delight as he fills their painted mouths with questions, exclamations, and frightful accounts of a train crash in the toyland of his imagination. In this particular story, Thomas the Tank Engine has tipped over, and Winnie the Pooh and the little people must get together to help get him back on the rails.

I am caught spying. Noah looks up and gives me a big smile. "Come play some toys, Daddy," he says, not minding my intrusion. "Sure," I say as I hunker down on the floor to play. I look forward to hearing the end of his story. Mostly I watch. He is an artist, skillfully weaving plot and character into a coherent narrative. Desperately, I reach back into my past, trying to recapture this sense of wonder and carefree imaginative spirit he shows so naturally, trying to remember what it was like to be an artist. For a time, it works; I am a child again, caught up in Noah's world of exploration, creativity, imagination, and joy. We make up more stories together, but it soon becomes obvious to me that Noah is far more accomplished at storytelling than I am. I'm a bit rusty, and it's harder now. As we play, my mind drifts to a pile of papers that need grading, and then to the lesson plans for tomorrow's classes. I begin worrying about bills, leaky faucets and household chores. Reality has forced its way in again. I think, "What happened to me?" Why was I so quick to give up creating and imagining? I miss the artist I once was.

Too often, we let our imagination get buried beneath the demands of life, or we let it take a back seat to our intellects. Child development theorists tell us that Noah is doing more than just telling stories and playing. He is learning as he plays. Indeed, he is constructing his own view of reality, making connections, creating meaning, and in short, understanding what it means to be alive. I, on the other hand, know how to do this stuff already ... or do I?

Thankfully, our imaginations never really leave us. Imagination is the key and foundation for all learning, not just childhood learning. It is the imagination that encourages us to experience life more deeply and more fully. If we choose to ignore the creative and imaginative side of ourselves, we deny ourselves a vital piece of the human experience. Much worse, if we fail to teach students how to harness the imaginative spirit within, we deny them that side of themselves that allows for new interpretations, new ways of thinking and understanding. I am convinced that without our powers of imagination, we would have no motivation to learn, no motivation to live.

I know that to analyze my way of teaching, I must analyze myself first. I need to look back at my own learning experiences and identify what worked (and what works) for me. As teachers, we need to be picking up where our students' kindergarten teachers left off. At the risk of sounding corny, we need to let our students explore their "inner child," allowing them to use their own prior knowledge as a basis for new learning and creative thinking. Too often though, we find ourselves in a rut we are reluctant to leave. "After all," we may say, "my way of doing things has seemed to work fine all these years, why should I change now?" Change is a scary thing, especially if it involves taking the focus off of ourselves and concentrating our efforts on to our students' learning experiences and trying to understand their views of the world.

Too, if we want to teach our students to think imaginatively, we had better teach imaginatively ourselves. For example, I need to constantly ask myself: What other ways are there to teach run on sentences? How can I structure class or group discussions to help students understand complicated subjects? How can I model effective notetaking in my class so that it will be more than a laundry list of terms to be covered during a test? Moreover, how can I create writing assignments that will both trigger the spark of creative thought and be practical? It is a daunting task—one that keeps me busy.

From the doorway, I watch my Composition students with curiosity as they complete an interactive dialogue writing assignment to be used in their personal narrative project. I watch one pair as they talk, create, and delight in the play of language and the joy of the learning.

I am caught spying. They look up from their desks. "Can we do this again sometime?" one student says. "Sure," I say as I hunker down to their desks. Suddenly, I make the connection. I guess I'm still an artist after all.

FREEDOM IN EDUCATION
CHAPTER 3
by Elizabeth Byrne Ferm

Co-direxctor, with her husband Alexis of the Stelton School, an anarchist Esculea Moderna *school in Stelton, New Jersey. Ferm's book appeared in 1936????.*

There are two important qualities of the true educator: activity and passivity. If I were asked which attribute I considered the greater, I would unhesitatingly say passivity. Do not confuse inability to control a situation—neglect to seize the moment—indifference to the outcome—timidity of action—or any other form of weakness, with passivity. Passivity, as I conceive it, is a conscious keeping off of hands, a deliberate letting alone. There is no passivity unless the educator has an understanding of the particular child whom he is striving to educate; unless he can recognize and follow the purpose and outcome of that particular child's acts. The professed friends and believers in passivity are often the ones who discredit it and hold it up to ridicule.

I once visited the home of a friend who was the mother of two children. The flat irons were left on the floor, so the children, almost every day, would fit their feet into them and slide along the highly polished, waxed floors. The father and mother were distressed by the noise they made and by the damage to the floors. They would take no action, however, because they had committed themselves to the idea of passivity in education. I suggested that the rational thing to do was to put the flat irons in the cupboard or on a shelf. If the children showed by word or deed that the flat irons were a positive need in their development, then they might with some reasonableness take them out again. The children were using them as they would any old thing which might be lying about.

On another occasion I called at the home of a woman who edited and published an educational magazine. She was another victim of the idea of passivity. She had sent for me. She was distracted. The coffee-mill had been negligently left on the sitting-room table. When I put in an appearance the coffee beans were scattered over the rug and the coffee-mill was thrown to one side. The child seemed to have no further use for nor interest in them. He was tugging and pulling at other subjects in the room. The mother was lying on the couch, overcome—as she phrased it—by the state of things. Instead of being over come by the situation, she was too negative, too weak to deal with it. She was on the verge of hysterics and kept on assuring me that she didn't want me to do anything but just sit with her.

I told her I would sit with her after I had put the coffee mill in its place and brushed up the coffee beans. She wondered if it would interfere with the child's development if the coffee-mill were put away. I took it upon myself to assure her that he was too busy to miss it and that I did not believe he would pine after it. In everything that has to do with the individual's inner life with self-expression—the educator should follow the child. The educator may commend the child's self-expression, but may not condemn it; may recognize his self-expression, but may not criticize it; may encourage the child's self-expression, but may not interfere with it. (This relates to the creative instinct.)

Such a relation between child and adult calls out and fosters the creative power of the individual, a power latent in all human beings. Such an attitude calls for a wide and deep understanding. It is easy enough to follow the child passively as long as his expressions are agreeable to the educator and in no way clash with the preconceived ideas and sensibilities of the adult. But to be able to recognize that every act of the child is necessitated from within is extremely difficult. And yet, every true and earnest educator knows even when he fails to practice it, that the safest and sanest thing is to let the child do the thing he wishes, and then let him reap the harvest he has sown.

This does not mean allowing the child to jump from the Empire State Building, to fall from a precipice or to be run over. If a child should thoughtlessly or willfully place himself in a dangerous position, the human as well as the rational thing to do would be to save the child from serious consequences. I simply mean that the child should be allowed to endure all that he is capable of enduring. He should face all that he has intentionally or unintentionally created, excited or provoked.

Letting alone may look like passivity. Non-interference may look like passivity. But to my mind there is no true passivity unless the educator is consciously striving to aid the child to attain knowledge of himself through and by means of the child's own acts and experiences.

Permitting the child to do the things he desires because the adults feels that the child has the right, as an individual, to do it, is not the passivity of the educator. Permitting the child to do what he wants is the relation of individual to individual. The educator's relation is more interior than that.

In education the child must be allowed to do the thing he wants to do, because he should have the right to do it, plus the understanding of why he wants to do it; why he is so actuated.

Many years of experience with children have forced me to the conclusion that before the relation of adult and child can become an educational one, it must be psychically established. And I know of no material agency by which the psychic is demonstrated to the child's consciousness—which I allow is wholly physical—unless you will concede that the tone of the voice, the stroke of the hand, the expression of the face are palpable, tangible means by which the inner relation may manifest itself. Whether your mind can or cannot concede that such a relation is fundamental to education, I still maintain that the psychic quality must exist in order to make the relation real and enduring, fitted to weather the storm and stress of their association, as child and educator.

Because of the psychic bond the educator can have order restored out of the most chaotic condition. Our doubting friends may insist that there must be something in the attitude of the educator, something physical to overrule a disorderly state. Well, let them experiment with young children and watch the result. Have you ever tried to affect a loving manner towards children when you were internally disturbed and wholly out of touch with them? Or have you assumed a commanding attitude when there was neither ability nor power to maintain the position? If you have, you also remember how you tried to wheedle the child, by soft words and simulated smiles, into complying—without success—and how, in the other case you blustered and fumed, and the child remained fixed, unchanged.

Children, like all simple, undeveloped natures, have a way of exposing sham. They are not mentally sophisticated enough to imagine what may or may not happen to them, if they refuse to yield. They deal with the actual situation which, when such methods are used, is essentially weak and untenable.

On the other hand, if the educator is *at one*—spiritually—with the child, the most discordant condition can be changed into one that is peaceful, by the child himself.

For example, one child may, through his general interference with the activities of others, create an uproar which is difficult to control. The excitement is too great to get down to the initial cause. Whatever incident started the commotion, the tumult makes it impossible to find out. The thing for the educator to recognize is that they are out of relation with one another. They are decentralized as individuals. The educator must help them to regain consciousness of themselves and the consciousness of their association to one another.

As an illustration, take a room which has fifteen or twenty children in it. They are all busy doing things in their different ways. So many activities create a great deal of noise. One boy is sliding a chair along the floor. He does not see another boy, who has just stepped forward. In a second there is a collision. According to his temperament the boy who has been struck may either cry or try to strike the other child. The misunderstanding develops into a grievance; other children are involved. Friends become enemies. The strong and brave; fight out their claim; the weaker ones vent their feelings by spitting, making faces at one another and calling names. The mob rules: Something must be done to restore a free condition, in which all may have a chance to express themselves. What shall that something be? Punish the aggressive ones? Become one of the mob also? Hardly! The needed thing is for the educator to realize what elements are lacking in that human gathering and try to restore them by calling them out of the children. The children are scattered mentally. Their human association is upset. They are simply reflecting their own disturbed states to one another.

Now is the time for the educator to summon to the rescue all the composure of spirit that he possesses. His inner serenity must be shown outwardly. Tranquil where the child is agitated; quiet where the child is noisy. When the educator is well centered within, he creates an atmosphere in which all begin to breathe and live as human beings. In less time than it takes to tell it, the mob has quelled itself and peace is restored. Once more a free society is established. The children feel the situation, but they do not understand it; they are contrite and ashamed of themselves. This result has been evolved from the inner attitude of the educator and the inner response of the children.

Such experiences cannot be trumped up. They are true indicators of the soundness of the educational relation.

After such an occurrence there is always a deeper and more sympathetic relation. They have struggled through something. They have sounded the depths in one another. They have touched bottom. They have had an experience together. They have had a realization together. *They feel the unity of human life.*

I have especially dwelt on the passivity of the educator, because it is the most difficult relation for educators generally, and because it is particularly so for myself. It is well known that we attribute the highest quality the thing of which we possess the least. Let me once more emphasize that the passivity of the educator has to do with all that relates to individual self-expression, self-activity.

The activity of the educator must be objectified by the educator becoming a creative, self-active member of the little society in which he finds himself as an individual. And also, through the consciousness with which he is able to reveal and reflect the social basis upon which we must all stand. The child is ignorant of any law or principle which binds or relates him to his playmate. When he finds himself in a trying situation with another child—whom he is not able to thrash or intimidate—he will suggest a compromise or will make a concession himself, which will put him in possession of the thing that he is after.

The child's understanding of things is proportioned to his experiences. He is very jealous about his own rights, his own possessions. *He senses might as right.* He does not scruple to encroach upon the rights of others, to carry off their belongings. Although he resents any invasion of his rights, he does not know how to maintain a position against such trespassing.

The educator, understanding why the child is actuated to leave his home, why he is actuated to develop a social relation with others, must emphasize the principles which unite all forms of human association.

I believe the child leaves his home to find himself as an individual. To know himself as an individual, he must intermingle with other individuals. The condition for such an experience must be founded on equality and equity. To realize equality and equity, he must have the conditions which will objectify those principles.

The child's natural opportunity, for instance, may consist of space, chairs, tables, materials to work with; everything in the place to be considered as common property; all having equal share; all having equal responsibilities.

Zealously and jealously these opportunities are watched by the educator; the principle of equality and equity is to be called out through their use. For instance, a child finds that he is the first arrival in the morning. He looks about him and naturally concludes that his right is bounded only by the limitations of the place. He may use, as he chooses; the opportunities which the place offers. He starts a line of cars, which takes in every chair in the room. Another child enters. The newcomer may not allow himself to think that he has any claim to a chair, because he sees them all utilized. The educator, knows, however, that before long that utilization will change into monopoly and then a conflict will ensue. Another child arrives. The chair suggests a train to him. He demands some of the chairs, or he attempts to take them. The one in possession in great wrath defends his property and beats off the newcomer. If the monopolizer is physically strong enough to keep the new claimant off, he will, possibly, be left in control

This is a situation that calls for the activity of the educator.

"Philip, why did Jakey hit you?"

"I wanted some chairs."

"Did you ask Jakey for them?"

"No! I took one."

"Perhaps Jakey does not understand you. Go and tell Jakey that you want some of the chairs."

Philip goes to Jakey but Jakey is watching things now. He is so inflated by his former success that he answers Philip with a blow. Philip does not feel like insisting on getting chairs, and is about to give up. Now is the educator's chance to emphasize Philip's right, as against Jakey's might.

"Jakey, why are you not willing to let Philip have some chairs?"

"I had them first. I want to use them," is the reply.

Jakey is told that he has the right to use everything in the room as long as no one else wishes to share it. But as soon as Philip feels that he, too, wishes to make a train of cars with the chairs, Jakey can no longer keep all of them.

Sometimes the dispute may arise over the use of something—say a swing—of which there is only one. A certain child may like it more than others, or want to control it and prevent the others from using it. A complaint is made that Sarah won't let Gussie swing. After Sarah has given her reasons—which usually go back to the fact that she was there first and she has not finished using it—Sarah is told that the others are not obliged to wait for her will and pleasure. The way to be fair to one another, when there is only one swing and others desire to have a chance, is for them to come to some agreement as to how long each one shall use it; the mere getting of a thing first does not give one the right to dominate it. Sarah is told that she must relinquish the swing, if she is not willing to use it with the others. If Sarah refuses to share the swing, she must be put off.

The simple, crude, physical consciousness conceives success as the just, the *right* cause. Success excites admiration; it indicates power. And power is the greatest thing that the physical consciousness can comprehend. Power to the simple mind implies life. Defeat, on the other hand, produces the opposite effect. It suggests weakness and weakness implies death. There is no tangible way of demonstrating the right of a thing, if it is followed by nonsuccess. It may call out pity but the cause is questioned. It arouses fear and mistrust. The physical consciousness is afraid of being involved in it. The cause is finally deserted. The educator, knowing this fact, must be careful in objectifying a principle in such a manner that the simple state of the child's mind may be able to entertain it. The child is instinctively right when he unites himself with the successful side and shrinks from the defeated cause.

Success *should* follow that which is true and just; what is false and wrong *should* suffer defeat.

I sometimes think that the reason why success does not follow the right is in a great measure due to our early impressions and conclusions. For instance, a strong child has usurped the place of a weaker one. The weaker one tearfully submits, or, at the most, he may try to kick the usurper. There seems to be no idea in their minds that there is any *right*. Everything is measured by might. The educator must take an active part in such an experience. An indignant protest from the educator against the physical domination on the one hand, and the meek submission on the other, will have its effect. Tyrant and slave are equally astonished. They have never heard the submissive one reproached before. The yielding child has never been treated before as a social offender. The educator insists that the right-thing for the submissive one is to resume and keep the place which the tyrant usurped from him. This attitude creates a new order of things. A revolution takes place in custom and thought. Right enthroned, might dethroned. The one who maintains and defends the new order is recognized as the strongest one in the room. Strength—not used to subjugate the weak, but to help the weak to become strong in action, and the physically strong to develop a more honorable and human relation to their playmates.

In everything that has to do with the social experiences of the child, the educator is actively leading. The educator may be the only one in the group who has had social experiences. And as our idea of equality and fairness was evolved from our social experiences, the child knows nothing of them. He has had no social experiences. The idea of justice does not have to be imposed on the child; he responds to it and holds himself close to the condition or place in which it is accentuated.

Richard Prystowsky has been a contributor to ΣΚΟΛΕ *for several years. His article, "Am I Really Qualified to Teach my Children?,"(Winter, 1995) has been reprinted a number of times, evidently having touched into a sensitive issue in the minds of conscientious parents. This time Richard, who homeschools his kids and also teaches in the School of Humanities and Language at Irvine Valley College in California, is offering high school and college students some good, down-to-earth advice when faced with the challenge of having their writing taken seriously by their instructors:*

HOW TO CONSTRUCT A GOOD COLLEGE-LEVEL ESSAY: SOME ADVICE FOR PROSPECTIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS

by Richard J. Prystowsky

"[P]eople often begin writing from a poverty mentality. They are empty and they run to teachers and classes to learn about writing. We learn writing by doing it. That simple. We don't learn by going outside ourselves to authorities we think know about it."

—Natalie Goldberg, Writing Down the Bones

First, a disclaimer: The points made in the following article are meant to be neither all-inclusive nor, in terms of writing, universally applicable. Instead, they are offered as a general narrative checklist intended to help you, the prospective college student, learn how to construct a good college-level essay. When considering the advice offered here, you should bear in mind the following three points: l) different instructors will evaluate papers, including the same paper, differently (some might privilege originality or creativity, for instance, whereas others might pay little or no attention to such matters); 2) different writing tasks call for different approaches to writing (an essay analyzing a Shakespearean sonnet, for example, fundamentally differs from a lab report written for a biology class); and 3) some criteria for good writing are discipline-specific (for example, active voice is preferred in most essays written for English courses, whereas passive voice is or might be preferred in much social science writing, such as that done in psychology and sociology classes). Thus, when you write your college essays, write with an eye towards meeting both the expectations of your intended reader (your English or psychology instructor, for example) and the specific objectives of your assignment. When in doubt, consult with your instructor.

This long caveat notwithstanding, we can identify some of the more important characteristics of writing common to all, or nearly all, well-written college essays. The narrative checklist that follows ought to help you see how you might work to ensure that your own essays contain these characteristics.

Derive and develop a good thesis. A "thesis" is the main idea, or main point, of a paper. It is an assertion, and hence not a question. It is not a fact ("The United States is a country"), but is, rather, a point or an idea that must be argued for ("The United States is the greatest country in the world"). To be considered good, a thesis needs to be proved or well supported. Indeed, one might even say that, in many cases, the writer writes the paper with the sole purpose of supporting or proving her thesis. In any event, when all is said and done, be sure that something in your essay—a statement or two, or an implied idea—adequately answers the question "So, what *is* the main point that I am trying to put forth in this essay?"

Although some instructors might advise you to come up with a thesis before you write your paper, I advise against this approach, since a good thesis ought to derive from your having first carefully considered facts, interpreted evidence, and so on. Otherwise, you run the risk of manipulating your data, forcing the evidence to fit your preconceived main point rather than allowing your careful evaluation of evidence to lead you to formulate a good main point. In short, first carefully study the evidence before you: the events that led you and your friend to stop speaking to each other; the chemical reactions that occurred when you ran your chemistry experiment; the nature of the metaphors used in the poem that you are studying; the thoughts and actions of government leaders embroiled in conflict with each other; the portrayal of men and women in your favorite television program; the nature of the lyrics in your favorite song. Then, develop a main point concerning this evidence—"It seems that I cannot trust my friend."; "These lyrics reflect the pessimism of my generation"—a main point that, in your paper, you will state or imply, as well as elaborate upon and argue for.

Note: Some instructors are very particular concerning thesis statements, their placement and development within essays, and so on. Other instructors are less particular concerning these matters; some, in fact, pay little or no attention to them. Whatever their views, many instructors would probably agree, however, that the lack of a thesis might signal a paper's problems in coherence, unity, good development of its points, or good narrative organization. Thus, as a general rule, you will be safest if you derive a main point of view that will, in effect, guide your writing and thinking efforts throughout your paper. When necessary, check with your instructors for exceptions to this rule, though.

Work on creating a fully developed narrative. As do all writers, many student writers worry about how much or how little they ought to say in their papers. Though no rules govern this area of writing, we can say with some certainty that, in most, if not all, of your college-level writing, you will do well to develop your ideas as fully as possible. To help yourself accomplish this goal, you might try imagining that you are a teacher whose purpose in writing the paper is to teach your students about the subject matter under consideration. Putting yourself in their place, ask yourself how much information and explanation you yourself would want or need to see presented in order to help you learn about this subject matter. Before putting your paper to rest, ask yourself the following question: "Will my students likely say that their understanding of this subject matter has increased, perhaps even greatly, because they have read my paper?"

Work on developing a well-organized narrative. For some writing tasks—such as science lab reports—you will have little or no choice concerning how you are to organize your writing. For many of your college writing assignments, however, you will have at least some freedom to organize your thoughts and observations as you see fit. When considering how best to structure a given essay, think about your purpose for writing the paper and the effect that you want to achieve in the paper, and then organize (and revise) your narrative accordingly. If in a personal essay, for example, your purpose is to move the reader by revealing a long-held, deeply meaningful secret about your life, you might ask yourself whether you should make this revelation at the beginning of the paper and then proceed to fill in the details of your personal story, or construct a narrative that leads up to this revelation, which you'll make at the end of the paper. Or, you might think about whether or not you should place the revelation in the middle of the narrative, organizing your supporting and clarifying thoughts strategically before or after you make your secret known. For this or any other writing task, you will want to consider your paper's specific needs and then structure your writing to meet those needs most effectively.

Write about that which you know—clearly, to the point, and in detail. Everything else being equal, we tend to write better when we write about subjects concerning which we are knowledgeable than when we write about subjects concerning which we don't know very much. Thus, even if an assignment calls for you to write about material unfamiliar or not very familiar to you—a common occurrence in college classes—you will greatly aid your writing efforts if, after analyzing pertinent evidence, you focus your writing on aspects of the material that you understand well. (By the way, don't be surprised if you discover that the mere act of writing about your subject matter helps you to reach a clearer understanding of the material under investigation.) Though, to be sure, you will need to cover the required territory—required by the assignment, that is—unless otherwise instructed you should try to narrow the focus of your essay, writing in detail about that which you know and saying more about less rather than trying to say less about more (don't worry about trying to "say it all"; no instructor will expect you to say everything that can or should be said about a given topic, since meeting such a goal is impossible). If, instead, you try to say too much in too few pages—offering, as it were, a kind of narrative table of contents—you'll likely under-develop your points and produce an incomplete essay whose ideas seem, at best, truncated or scattered, or both. And if you try to write about something concerning which you don't have much knowledge, you might very well end up producing rather unclear thoughts in your paper, thoughts which might be matched by rather unclear prose (not uncommonly, in our papers we find that the quality of our thinking coincides with the quality of our writing).

To help your reader understand your thoughts and appreciate your work, try to present your ideas as clearly and to the point as possible, offering your reader concrete, descriptive details meant to help her literally and figuratively see your points. For example, in a lab report for your chemistry class, don't write that the chemical reaction in your experiment looked neat. Instead, describe in detail what happened when you mixed the chemicals together. Interested, intended readers (your chemistry instructor, for instance) might conclude, on their own, that the reaction must have looked neat; but if they don't, then no matter, since the assignment probably called for you to describe what happened in the experiment rather than how you, and not the chemicals, reacted to what happened.

In her excellent book *Writing Down the Bones,* writer and teacher Natalie Goldberg writes clearly and to the point about the writer's need to write clearly and to the point: "Don't tell readers what to feel. Show them the situation, and that feeling will awaken in them" (68). Furthermore, she urges: "Be specific. Don't say 'fruit.' Tell what kind of fruit—'It is a pomegranate.' Give things the dignity of their names." (70). This last point is particularly crucial. For, as Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh writes, "[e]very time we call something by its name, we make it more real..." *(Peace Is Every Step* 28).

Write honestly—but know your audience. Perhaps no element has more potential to ruin an otherwise promising paper than does the element of dishonesty. Since most of your assignments ought to allow you to write with integrity, don't write with the intention of trying to say merely what you think that your instructor wants to hear, especially if you disagree with the ideas that you are advocating in your paper. An experienced reader can often detect insincerity in writing. Perhaps, thinking that the writer has tried to hoodwink her, she might respond to such writing in much the same way that many of us might respond: with frustration, disappointment, and maybe even anger.

My experience leads me to think that the "typical" college instructor wants to see in her students' work evidence of the latter's own well-conceived, informed views, whether or not these views coincide with hers. The truth be told, sometimes she might be more critical of views that differ from hers than she is of views with which she agrees. Nevertheless, she probably wants to see her students carefully work with the material, deriving informed views that are proved or supported by evidence which they present and explain in their papers. Ideally, when she evaluates her students' writing, she will look for signs of methodologically good work and analytically sound ideas, not for confirmation of her own views.

However, we teachers aren't perfect, and we often fall short of living up to our ideals. Indeed, we are human beings, complete with our share of human strengths and, to be sure, human weaknesses. Writer and professor Peter Elbow addresses this point when he notes that, as readers of your papers, teachers "illustrate the paradox that audiences sometimes help you and sometimes get in your way" *(Writing with Power 216).* Thus, from time to time, you might find that you need to avoid saying certain things in your college writing in order not to provoke a harsh reaction from your instructor, and sometimes, for the same reason, you might need to avoid writing about a subject entirely. If, for instance, your instructor is adamantly opposed to homeschooling, you probably would be wise not to write an essay in defense of homeschooling, unless, after speaking with you about your proposed topic, your instructor assures you that he will give your paper a fair reading. When you confer with him concerning this kind of predicament, field-test your ideas and arguments to see how he responds to them. If ultimately you don't feel that your instructor will read your paper fairly, choose another topic—perhaps with his help—on which you can write honestly. (A note of caution here: don't assume that your instructor's rejection of your argument necessarily implies his unfairness. It is possible that your argument simply doesn't work.) In short, be honest in your writing, yes. But also be a smart, perceptive student: recognize us teachers, the audience for most or all of your college papers, for the imperfect human beings who we are; aware of our strengths and cognizant of our weaknesses, write your essays for us accordingly.

* * * * *

In closing, I want to direct your attention to an idea articulated in this article's epigraph: to wit, that we "learn writing by doing it" and not "by going outside ourselves to authorities we think know about it." (Goldberg 30). Some writing teachers (I included) would even go so far as to say that writing cannot be taught; to be sure, one can learn basic writing skills and acceptable writing conventions, but the heart and soul of one's writing—that which makes one's writing authentic, genuine, and, at times, powerful and moving—comes from within and not from outside of oneself. In this regard, you are your own best teacher. With practice, you ought to be able to develop the skills and techniques that will enable you to produce good, and often personally meaningful, college-level prose.

To this end, the suggestions outlined above are offered to help you become an ever more sophisticated, proficient thinker and writer. But don't worry if you find yourself struggling to write well. As Peter Elbow cogently writes in *Writing Without Teachers*, "...if you have special difficulty in writing, you are not necessarily further from writing well than someone who writes more easily" (viii). Indeed, the act of writing—at least the act of attempting to produce good writing—is a struggle requiring the writer to have patience and, often, a thick skin. To write well in college, you must be willing to revise your work even when you think that you couldn't possibly make it better, and you must be willing to challenge your ideas so that you can enable yourself both to learn and to grow. In college, your only work-related obligation is the obligation to think and learn; most, if not all, of your college activities—studying, reading, writing, taking exams, participating in club events derive from and reflect this obligation. Writing need not be an obstacle to your fulfilling this obligation. Indeed, if you trust yourself enough in the company of your written words, you might discover that your college writing tasks provide you with one of your most deeply engaging and profoundly meaningful venues for personal growth and academic achievement.

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RETHINKING EDUCATION CONFERENCE

by Jeannine Parvati Baker

Imagine a four star hotel in one of the most wealthy of venues in the United States. Now see hundreds of children running up and down the stairs, playing in the elevators, and laughing at the top of their lungs for a week-end without anyone trying to curtail their exuberant expressions. Add to this their parents likewise having a ball as we improve the upward mobility of our minds in an atmosphere of discovery and joy. Not a polyester suit in sight, nor necktie and forget about high heels. Is this scene possible at the end of the 20th millennium?

"Where have I been all of your lives?" I ask the assembly at the closing keynote of Mindfull's Conference. I felt as if I had come home to my global family at this event. For almost 30 years I have been the lone, persistent mother at conferences who attended with my children regardless of rules about their participation. It was a relief to be at a conference where each age was welcomed and the program consistently reflected the emphasis on family education. Mindfull is the brain-child of Barb Lundgren and Sarah Jordan, two homeschooling mothers in Texas. Over the years they have developed a format which makes Memorial Day weekend one that families look forward to all year.

The Fourth Annual Weekend Conference on Rethinking Education was held in Dallas/Ft Worth on May 22-25, 1998 at the Hilton Hotel. The hotel will never be the same.

The theme, "Families Leading the Future of Education," was especially poignant in light of the news breaking of Kipley, the high school murderer who gunned down fellow students in an Oregon school cafeteria. Hundreds of families from all over the USA had gathered Memorial Day Weekend to explore new ways of unschooling our children, to be reminded of the most horrible motive to keep our children home—public education is dangerous to one's health. From the worst possible scenario in education, to the best and everything in between was shared during the week-end.

We got off to a great start with John Taylor Gatto's keynote address, "Who Are The Experts?"—which challenged the idea that education experts have our children's best interests at heart. From the three-time winner of New York's Teacher of the Year Award, we learned that the agenda of public education is to maintain the corporate status quo, which is no surprise to *ΣΚΟΛΕ* readers.

Curriculum is carefully designed to stupidize students, impair critical thinking and hamper creativity. There are as many ways that families come to homeschooling as there are families, yet to understand that educating children at home is a radical act with profound political implications expanded our context of meaning and united us as interdependent change agents for evolution.

I knew I was in the right place at the very first session. I accompanied my 14-year-old son Quinn to a teen improvisation workshop facilitated by David Hickox. Before it began, a young woman hit a young man as he entered the room. He immediately said, with amazement, "Why did you hurt me? I have never hurt you?" It took me years of therapy to be able to say this in relationship and here this young teen already had the basic life skills to question and share his truth. One hears a lot about how homeschool might deprive a child of social skills, yet I have yet to see this. Rather, in schools, children learn competition and how to repress feelings, some to the point of an eruption of unconscionable violence after many years of neglect to one's soul. As Kipley from Oregon demonstrated, it is better to be wanted by the police than not wanted at all

Workshops ranged from cartooning to ropes courses, a day at Six Flags for the teens, dancing and drumming for all ages, math and physics for kids, a newsletter created at the conference by the children, the spiritual life of children, sign language, storytelling, first aid for kids and natural healing workshops for adults plus numerous lively, insightful and inventive discussion groups on blended families in homeschool, dealing with skeptical families and friends, single parenting, un-jobbing and what about college? I gave two workshops—one on dreams and another on fertile sexuality for mothers and daughters (to an audience with standing room only) and found the quality of dialog in each to express both of the original meanings of education—to draw out the inner knowing and to care. Indeed, the entire event was so carefully, mindfully conceived and (wo)manifested that everyone was nurtured and refreshed with all the excitement of a family reunion.

The Talent Show shook the building with thunderous applause and the Kids/Home Business Expo had the tone of a festival with balloons, story telling and a live band. Booth space is free, so children are encouraged to make items all year for the expo. My children Halley and Quinn helped in our booth, working on commission selling our books—in our homeschool, this is the best way to teach fractions I have yet to find! When they get their precise commission correct, they get paid it!

My closing keynote, "Parenting in the New Millennium," was received to a standing ovation and I thought back to when I witnessed Peggy O'Mara in front of a conference audience many years ago be honored likewise. Peggy's eyes filled with tears, that sweet dew distilled from heaven, as she was bathed in gratitude for her work to educate mothers. The education goes on—for some of us, it is at home, for, as I noted in my speech, when asked why I homeschool my children, I say, "I don't want school to interefere with my children's education." May education leave a wash of love however it flows in the future.

Considering a family vacation in 1999? Do yourself a favor and come to Texas for the 5th Mindfull Weekend Conference.

For more information contact Mindfull—source@flash.net
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REVIEWS:

LIVING BY WONDER:
the Imaginative Life of Childhood

by Richard Lewis
1997 Parabola Books
New York, NY
148 pages (paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

Living by Wonder, the Imaginative Life of Childhood is a series of essays by a lifelong teacher and writer, a man with as consummate a sense of the delicacy and intimacy of the learning process as any I've ever encountered. Throughout this marvelous collection, the author leads us by example with his sensitive, softly embroidered prose, modeling a reverence for the unfolding of a child's intelligence that is fast being buried under an avalanche of hype and hysteria concerning educational goals and standards.

The word "education" has too course a sound to describe the subject matter of Richard Lewis. His thesis transcends the mundane acquisition of the "Three R's" and the digestion of data about the external universe, instead delving inward to examine how we, as parents and teachers, can best nurture one of a child's greatest gifts of all: the imagination.

The author begins with an essay about the assimilation of language, one of the primary tools of the imagination and the foundation of all later learning. He writes:

> The noise of our verbalizing culture too quickly deafens what children innately understand. Their early relation to language is a poetic one, reaching far beyond utilitarian speech. They are surprised by speaking with the smallest bird or the most distant sun. They sense that this communication was what language was supposed to be: a link to what is here, can be imagined, and has once been.

One of the hallmarks of Lewis' long career has been fostering the literary exploits of young writers. Over the years he has edited numerous volumes of children's poetry and prose. One of them, *Miracles: Poems by Children of the English-speaking World* has sold over a quarter of a million copies and has been in the Free School library for many nearly two decades.

Here is a poem by eleven-year-old Maria Hourtgan which Lewis offers up as an example of the extraordinary ability of a child, imagination still intact, to describe the subtle mystery of everyday life:

Gentle as a feather
Cat quiet
Snow soft
Gentle, gentle as a feather
Softer that snow
Quiet as a cat
Comes the evening breeze

In 1969, the author founded the Touchstone Center with the mission of preventing teachers in the New York City school system from succumbing to the monotony of public education. The center continues to this day to hold workshops that help them to learn ways to fan the creative spark in their students. In an essay entitled, "The Pulse of Learning," Lewis exhorts:

> How stifling it is for many children in our schools to find after kindergarten (in some cases before) that the prerequisites of getting ahead in school are to divide play from work, imagination from fact, feeling from truth. How confusing it must be to children to be told that their senses (hence their bodies) are not where they learn, and that real learning takes place only in the citadels of the intellect.

Richard Lewis' latest book is a stirring defense of the wonder that is the birthright of every child. If he had a magic wand, he would return wonder to the gravitational center of everyone, young and old, so that we could all perceive like eight-year-old Max that:

This eye started from nothing,
white tears, sun, tornadoes,
secrets, night.

THE COMMON VISION.
Parenting and Educating for Wholeness
by David Marshak

published by Peter Lang Publishing
New York, 1997
247 pages (paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

I especially like this book because it opens with a discussion of the paradox of modern existence, the most central of which, perhaps, is the fact that—despite the power of contemporary media technology to connect humanity on a global level— many of us are experiencing more separateness from the divine, our true selves, each other, and the natural world than ever before in history.

This unhappy reality causes David Marshak to pose three fundamental questions at the outset: What is the true nature of human beings; what is the course of human growth from birth through twenty-one; and given this understanding of human growth, what are the desired functions of child raising and education?

For answers the author turns to the teachings of three early twentieth-century spiritual teachers: Rudolf Steiner, a world-renowned Theosophist and founder of the Waldorf School; Aurobindo Ghose, known to many as Sri Aurobindo and founder of the Aurobindo International Centre of Education; and Inayat Khan, a Sufi Mystic and founder of the Sufi Seed Centers.

All three men, according to Marshak, were intently focused on the vital importance of fostering the development of the whole child. They wrote and lectured extensively on the subject and each created his own developmental model which later became the basis for a number of children's schools around the world. Marshak spends the majority of the book elucidating and contrasting the views of Steiner, Aurobindo, and Khan, concluding that, taken as a whole, they hold out a shared vision of education that transcends the mere transmission of information and cultural values to captive young people. Their common bottom line: There exist levels of being far greater than the mind, and the true job of education is to embrace the soul and the heart as much as it does the mind.

Like his spiritual guides, Marshak, too, teaches teachers. He urges, in a message intended to include parents as well, that we all pay closer attention to our own personal and spiritual development so that we can become models of wholeness to the children with whom we live and work.

Along the way, however, Marshak casually tosses out such jargon-laden phrases as "energies of evolution," "postmodern," and "conscious coevolution," which the author neglects to unpack and which I find so typical of the somewhat nebulous thinking that has come to be known today as "holistic education." Still, I agree with him, in spirit as well as in principle, that the increasing secularism and materialism of mainstream education is doing our children great inner harm and preventing the sprouting of any real seeds of change.

If we are to "evolve" out of the current set of planetary crises of which all of us are all too aware, then it is imperative that we concentrate on helping children to develop self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-discipline—to teach them *how* to fish rather than just handing them fishes. I also agree with the author as he rightly points out that, in a certain way, the free school movement of the late-sixties (which the author appears not to realize is alive and well in the late-nineties) was barking up the wrong tree when it focused so heavily on granting freedom of choice and respect for personal autonomy to high schoolers. Such a process of liberation needs to begin as early in life as possible and it is up to us as parents and teachers to begin hacksawing through the cultural bars that have been placed around childhood in "postmodern" America.

STUDENT WRITINGS:

It is with the greatest of pleasure that we publish verbatim this first chapter of Madeline Leue's first book (Yes, she's one of my grandchildren! Aren't I lucky?). Maddy had a great story in ΣΚΟΛΕ [Fall, 1996), and we hope she continues to enjoy writing—and that the inspiration for more chapters persists!

HOME IS WHERE THE HART IS

Or the story of a slave girls freedom

by Maddy F. Leue

Introduction

"No, no mama don't go. Daddy, mama don't go", I remember saying as my mama and papa left me. Theys was runnin for the freedom from the whites. I was a good bred girl and knowed that we was just as good as any white folk. My mama and papa left me with auntie and uncle and would send for us when they had them a house. We was slaves and our owner was not like most. He ain't bad, he just down right horrible. We could write, but that ain't the point. I knowed that I would get there only if mama and papa made it, but what I did not know was I was to walk from Montgomry, Alabama to Boston, Massachusetts with people spittin' and a cussin' all the ways. I also didn't know that my aunt and uncle, my new guardians who I loved, would die...that week.

chapter 1

freedom for a slave is not like must thought

I was but 8 and 9 when the real thing happened, but strong full of heart and adventures. I remember when 4 days after mama and papa left, auntie lay in bed and said "I'm a gonna die tonight, give me a good by kiss" and me and uncle did and she was damm right. The next day was Saturday we was burying auntie and uncle started crying and fell down and died .I buried him right side aunt. Days passed, weeks passed and the war started. I cried at night a lot . The owner's son died- served him right. I worked as the kitchen helper and maid in the nursery. One day I got a letter from mama and papa.

It said:

are dear child and her aunt and uncle,

how are you alls. we's as good as could be. We's gotta house in Boston mass.

we's got a new little baby dater and son. Daters name is Hope Christy Truth Little and the son is Frederick Tree Love Little. I told them all about you Harriet Hatty Mary Little.I also told them to call you Hatty. Theys twins and just passed one year. The boy call you Tatty or Fatty and the girl call you Hat.

To wright back, say that you will deliver all master's letters then sneak yours in to. The address: henry and Sosy Little on Blue Coat Road, Boston Mass .

When Lincoln says we's freed you come on up with auntie and uncle. you will know the house when you see it. after all, home is where the hart is.

love mama and daddy

I wrote back,

Dear mama and daddy,

auntie and uncle died. I cry lots. loving you.

Hattie little

and tell the little ones I loving them alls. where you is, that is home where the hart tis.

Short, but I didn't care one little bit. That night I cry so much I got red in my eye and blue around the edge. I aint told you bute the place yet. Well thems whites sold cotton and tobacco a lot so that's what the master grode. It was big plantation land.And it had lots of black slave folk. my grandmama and granddaddy got sold to a another man and are slave owner why he was cream pie next to him.My brother he to got sold, but to a nice looking folk and last my sister who I loved ever so much ran away got caught and then sold to the big mean badest man you ever see. I got a letter from brother that said......

Dear dearest sister,

my master cream pie and that's what I eat. Please wright back at: Jony s, little red solder lane Jackson Mississippi.

loving ya alls and hoping to see ya alls

your brother

And I write back

Dear brother,

I good but auntie and uncle died and mama and daddy runed for the freedom we black folks sure need. Mama and daddy adrass: Henry and sosy little blue coat road Boston mass. When honest abb says wes freed you and me meet. Then we go to the home that is home where the hart is.

loving ya
try to find grandmama and granddaddy
Hattie little

Just then did it dawn on me. I was to walk right from here to Boston a little lise then XXXXX miles!!!!!! then I thought will thems whites like blacks or not. chances are probably not. In a little the proclamation was sighned wes was free!!!! Master said now you still my slaves and I aint letten you go. But the next day I got three water bottles seven scarves I happen to have 5 wash rags to make into clothes 3 dresses 2 pair of sack made pants 5 shirts and 6 skirts. I also packed a knife and 5 needles 9 deferent colored spools of thread some food I had saved (half a loaf of bread, a slice cheese, little chicken, broccoli and lettuce) and a hole dollar my life's earning then I left with all this in a gunni sack.

It was night by then and I snuck out got to the road and walked. soon I rested on a bench and fast sleep before I even closed my eyes. when I woke up it was the morn. so I walked to a store and asked where is Boston mass maam. and she said down the street to the hospital then the court house, they will tell you where to go.

I wonder what life would have been like if I hadent looked at the street and seen two men one white one black fighting an thems way with thems fists and a kicking and a screaming on the side walk.I did and I am sure to hell happy I did. I met mr. Abraham freeman. I got In the middele of thems fight and said whys you fighin.The white said that upidy darn Niger went and killed my brother. that was easy to see in ones head. The black was about 7 feet tall and his muscles were huge. The black said he put guns to my head.I said stop. The white said get out of the way little nigger child or I will bash your head for sure. He was not joking ether when the black got away he held my head and bashed me right twin my eyes. The black ran back and caught me. I fainted there but latter that black said to me that he had throne the axe so far that eyes cold not see it and the white had ran ran ran like mad.

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The following story was sent to us by Mikaela Crank, two of whose poems appeared in the spring issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ. We made Mikaela's acquaintance when she sent us a story("The Blue Bird"), which had won an award as one of the best essays submitted to an international contest for student writers, the results of which were first published in Skipping Stones, *a periodical for children of all ages and reprinted (with permission) by us in ΣΚΟΛΕ, Fall, 1996. Mikaela is Navajo, and lives in Dennehotso, AZ. And I have just learned from* Skipping Stones' *editor Arun Toké that Mikaela is their Board's Youth representative! Good choice!*

THE WHITE PEARL

A true story for Lindsey Ellis Green
and other 10 year olds
by Grandpa Bill

Once long ago all of the black people in America were slaves. They had been captured in Africa by white hunters. They were sent chained up in the dark damp holds of crowded slave ships to America where they were sold on an auction block to "masters." The slaves worked mostly long hours every day in the cotton fields and lived in hovels.

Most of the masters took good care of them because they cost a lot of money. But some were mean. They would flog them if they didn't work hard; and cut off their toes if they ran away. The masters could sell the children, or the mother or the father and break up a family. The black people were slaves. The masters could do anything they wanted with them, Then America fought a big war, The Civil War. And Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves.

But for another hundred years the black people were not really free. They could not live near the white folks. They could not shop in the white man's shops. They could not eat in the white man's restaurant. They could not stay in a white man's hotel, or drink at the white man's fountain, or go to the white man's toilet. Black people had to sit in the back of the bus. And they had to go to their own black schools. Then one time they rose up. They refused to sit in the back of the bus. They ate at the white man's counter. They refused to buy in white man's stores.

And so the white men decided to integrate the schools and put the black children in the same schools as the white children. And that is where our story begins. In one school a black girl came. She was glad to move out of the broken down school she had been in.

It was in a dark swampy area at the end of a muddy road. And she was happy to be in the big new brick school on the sunny hill. And to have the well equipped school yard to play in. And to have new books instead of the old worn out ones of the black school. But she felt alone. Most of the white kids ignored her. They weren't mean, but they just ignored her. She was like a black pearl in a bowl of white pearls, just different.

But there was one white girl who didn't notice the difference. This white girl had lots of friends some were very tall and thin, some were short and stout. Some were girls, some were boys. Some were red heads. Others had brown hair. Some liked to write, others liked to play ball. They were all different. And this girl just didn't notice that the black girl was different. So they played together. They used the swings together, and the slide. And they skipped rope together. And they talked together.

One day when they were talking the little black girl said she was going to summer camp. The camp was on a river, and they had lots of nature walks, And they had lots of outdoor games. And they had lots of indoor crafts. So the white girl wanted to go. She asked her mother and father. And they visited the black girl's family and found that he was a doctor, and that they were nice people. And that the camp was very well run. So they said yes she could go.

So off went the white girl and the black girl to summer camp. And they had fun. They lived in a big dormitory with lots of bunk beds. And they swam and went boating, and played games, and did crafts. But after awhile the white girl found things were different. They ate different foods, they had grits every morning for breakfast. And they had red eye gravy, and chittlins, and lots of other "soul food." And they were religious. But not in the way the white girl had been. She had gone to Sunday school and colored pictures of Jesus feeding the multitudes, and being kind to the bad Samaritan, and doing a lot of other things.

But at the camp they went to a real church. And the preacher shouted at the people and the people shouted back with words like "Amen Brother," and "Praise the Lord", and "Jesus, Jesus." And they sang and waved their hands and moved their feet and swung their bodies, and had lots of fun. And there were a lot of other things different at the camp. They talked different. Some of the counselors would say "Aks me to hep" instead of "Ask me to help." So the white girl felt different. And this bothered her. She didn't know why.

But sometimes she would just lie on her bunk and sob. This bothered all the campers and all the counselors and they tried hard to make every thing good. But this just made the white girl feel more different. And she sobbed harder. She wasn't really sad, or hurt, or unhappy but just felt different. Like a white pearl in a bowl of black pearls.

But that was just once in a while and most of the time she had a good time and was very happy and she was almost sad to go home. And maybe this experience was one of the reasons why she grew up to be a special person. And she got married. And she had her own children and she named one of them Lindsey. And maybe Lindsey will grow into a white pearl.

NOT JUST FOR FUN, THIS TIME!

Children as teachers:

Here are some stories I received online:

"The Golden Gift"

Some time ago, a friend of mine punished his 3-year-old daughter for wasting a roll of gold wrapping paper. Money was tight, and he became infuriated when the child tried to decorate a box to put under the tree. Nevertheless, the little girl brought the gift to her father the next morning and said, "This is for you, Daddy." He was embarrassed by his earlier overreaction, but his anger flared again when he found that the box was empty. He yelled at her, "Don't you know that when you give someone a present, there's supposed to be something inside of it?" The little girl looked up at him with tears in her eyes and said, "Oh, Daddy, it's not empty. I blew kisses into the box. All for you, Daddy." The father was crushed. He put his arms around his little girl, and he begged her forgiveness. My friend told me that he kept that gold box by his bed for years. Whenever he was discouraged, he would take out an imaginary kiss and remember the love of the child who had put it there. In a very real sense, each of us as parents has been given a gold container filled with unconditional love and kisses from our children. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold.

"The Most Caring Child"

Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child. The winner was a four-year-old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing ... I just helped him cry."

"Two Nickels and Five Pennies"

When an ice cream sundae cost much less, a boy entered a coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him. "How much is an ice cream sundae?" "Fifty cents," replied the waitress. The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied a number of coins in it. "How much is a dish of plain ice cream?" he inquired. Some people were now waiting for a table, and the waitress was impatient. "Thirty-five cents," she said angrily. The little boy again counted the coins. "I'll have the plain ice cream." The waitress brought the ice cream and walked away. The boy finished, paid the cashier, and departed. When the waitress came back, she swallowed hard at what she saw. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies—her tip.

"What It Means to Be Adopted"

Teacher Debbie Moon's first graders were discussing a picture of a family. One little boy in the picture had a different color hair than the other family members. One child suggested that he was adopted and a little girl named Jocelynn Jay said, "I know all about adoptions because I was adopted." "What does it mean to be adopted?" asked another child. "It means," said Jocelynn, "that you grew in your mommy's heart instead of her tummy."

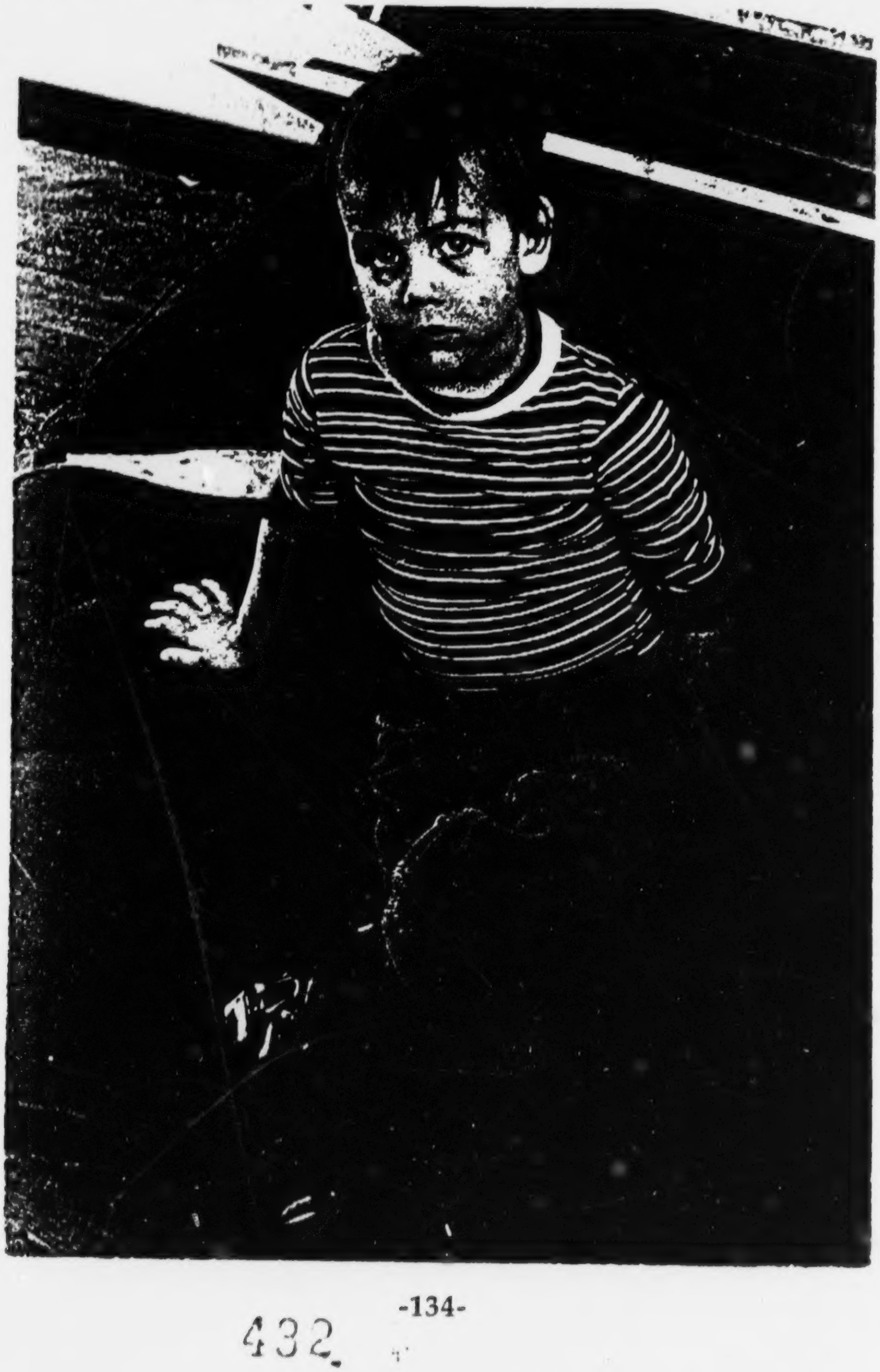
"Discouraged?"

As I was driving home from work one day, I stopped to watch a local Little League baseball game that was being played in a park near my home. As I sat down behind the bench on the first-baseline, I asked one of the boys what the score was. "We're behind 14 to nothing," he answered with a smile. "Really," I said. "I have to say you don't look very discouraged." "Discouraged?" the boy asked with a puzzled look on his face. "Why should we be discouraged? We haven't been up to bat yet."

"Roles And How We Play Them"

Whenever I'm disappointed with my spot in my life, I stop and think about little Jamie Scott. Jamie was trying out for a part in a school play. His mother told me that he'd set his heart on being in it, though she feared he would not be chosen. On the day the parts were awarded, I went with her to collect him after school. Jamie rushed up to her, eyes shining with pride and excitement. "Guess what Mum," he shouted, and then said those words that will remain a lesson to me: "I've been chosen to clap and cheer!"

Some of these images from the past twenty-nine years of The Free School have appeared in previous issues of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, but it seemed like fun to adorn this last issue with a few of the more evocative ones, so here they are, starting with Dylan Moore, who must be at least thirty by now:



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Here are Bruce, who was co-director of the school with me for five or six years, and Stephanie, third child in a family of four, with us for a number of years. No one I have spoken with has seen Stephanie recently, but her older brother John Boy has been employed for several years as a valued assistant in a downtown office supply shop that also does color copying, so we see him from time to time. Stephanie must be around twenty-four or so.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Here's Robin, who, arriving at twelve after many delinquent years in ghetto public school classes, led us a merry chase while she was with us! Robin is thirty-five or six now, married, with two kids. We sometimes see her in the grocery store. She's fine now, solid, and remembers her years of freedom with us very fondly.

This is Lily, born into the school, shown here learning to weave with our Japanese teacher Mitch. Lily's fourteen now, going into tenth grade, having ended the year with an honors award. She's also a counselor-in-training at a summer camp lots of our kids go to.

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This is Abra, who came in 1970 at the age of two, along with her young parents, who taught with us for several years, Barbara becoming the co-director of the school during the 80s. Abra, now thirty, is married and has children of her own.

Here's Audry, cartoonist, mask-maker, Meg Murray in our school movie *A Wrinkle in Time*, who went on to attend RPI and currently works as a legislative assistant in the New York State State Assembly. She lives with her younger brother Kaleb around the corner in a house they bought and rehabilitated together.

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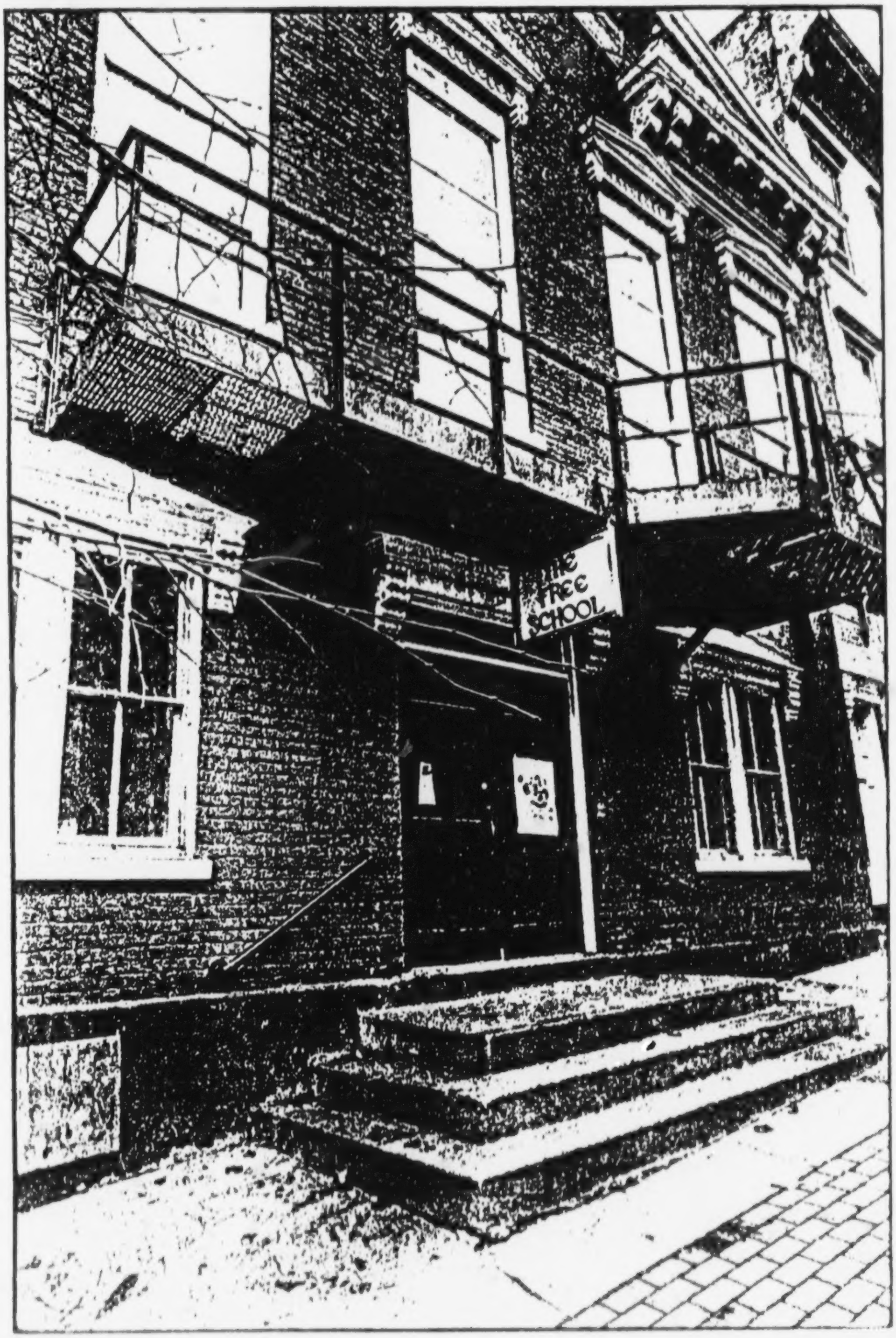
And finally, here's the school, from a *Times-Union* photograph taken in the early 90s:



DAVID BRICKMAN

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Not Just For Fun This Time

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

There's a story I love about a contractor heard muttering to himself, "Goddam kids! Goddam kids!" Asked by a lfriend, "Oh, don't you like kids?" he answered gruffly, "Sure, I like kids, all right. I like them in the abstract, but NOT in the concrete!" It sometimes seems to me that we are all wrestling with this dichotomy between the abstract and the concrete, with what we want and what we have or who we are! I guess I'm basically on the side of the concrete.

I have a friend Alice who is a Jungian atrologer. She once said that the Age of Aquarius would be a time when there was too little that was personal in relationships, too little of the HEART in human affairs! And reading, watching and listening to what seems to be happening to our society, it seems as though Alice was right. The family is under duress on all sides. Divorce is at an alltime high, nearly 50% when I last heard. Latchkey children are all too common, as the press of finances and the demands of both the feminist and the consumer cultures drive both parents away from home to work. Childrearing is either being turned over to entertainment gadgets like TV and video, or left in the hands of strangers—babysitters, housekeepers and day care centers like KinderCare. Urban poor black families used to be able to fall back on grandmothers to raise the young, but that's not so common as it used to be.

The process of depersonalization, institutionalized in our curriculum/achievement-centered schools, has been redefined for us in insidious ways as aspects of the norm, so that it is largely viewed as such by a great many people! They (we) struggle to cope with the stress engendered thereby, but any other way of daily living seems unworkable—and so a more satisfying way of life is relegated to an idealized rural past fictionalized in sweet stories like *The Little House on the Prairie* or else to some future time, a post-modern age of unearthly joy! Any other time, in fact, but just not now!

Having lost faith in the Century of Progress once touted by GE and General Motors during the late 30s and again (after World War II) during the 50s, we now choose to believe that the American Dream is vanishing or has vanished—lived out in that past of bucolic simplicity so many of us yearn to reexperience. Increasingly, we find ourselves living in a world in which what we really want—for ourselves, for our children—is somewhere else, or contingent on having enough money, or to be be found only with someone else than the partner we actually have, or by eating a healthy diet and jogging or attending exercise classes or weight loss programs!

For me, the irony of this scenario lies in the fact that we DO KNOW what we want! And we are willing to work very hard indeed to have it! Increasing numbers of us are turning to homeschooling our kids or finding or organizing alternative schools. John Taylor Gatto's eloquence and revelations about the hidden purposes of the origins of public schooling reinforces our own wavering faith in our own poor powers to make changes for ourselves and our children! We are discovering daily that our representatives in the government are as bewildered and filled with fears and foibles as any of the rest of us! Like Pogo, we has looked upon the enemy and discovered that HE is US. BUT—by the same syllogism, WE is also HIM!

And, that being the case, we can do something about it! We can take over the reins of our lives and learn for ourselves what is good and what is not! We can stumble, fall, pick ourselves up again, start over, go on, and LEARN! THIS is Plato's LIFELONG LEARNING! If only we NEVER give up on ourselves, NEVER give up on our fellow learners, we can make it together. Together, not like magnetized iron filings all pointing in the same direction, but as full individuals, each of us pursuing our own individual good yet bound together by our common humanness!

Last spring we heard that a man named Paul Ray, who has been doing research into post-World War II subcultures in the US, has identified two main groups: what he calls the traditionalists, who look backward to salvation through perennial institutions—religion and family—and the modernists, who look forward to salvation through technology and economic growth. Ray says that there is a third subculture which only came into existence during the fifties and has been growing very rapidly ever since. He calls this group "cultural creatives," who tend to value ecological perspectives, community, relationship and ideas from other cultures. They often value feminine as well as masculine qualities, and emphasize personal and spiritual development. He says they now account for 24%, or 44,000.000, of the population of the US! All is not lost, if we can jiust hang in long enough!

I got back in mid-November from a two-month-long trip around the world, visiting people and schools in four countries. It was tremendously heartening to me to see dedication in each place I visited to the kinds of culturally creative ideals and values I have just described. I had left the US in a state of despair resulting from a weakened sense of inspiration and deep doubts about my own value as a human being!

This darkened state of mind had not come about rapidly, but had grown imperceptibly over a period of many months, characterized by a gradual loss of faith in the value of this journal and of my own ability to lead it into a publication worthy of its name. *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, under the name by which Plato designated his Academy, stands for lifelong learning. My self-doubts coincided with an increasingly clear awareness that, at the age of seventy-eight, I could no longer do as good a job as I wished to do.

Many, many lovely things happened to me during the trip as I gratefully enjoyed the hospitality and support of families and school people around the world! One of the tiny droplets of fellow feeling I drew strength from was a chance remark by David Gribble, founder of Sands School in England, during an afternoon and evening spent with David and Lynette, having been invited through the kind auspices of Mary John, with whom I was staying in England. I expect we were speaking about our experiences of having founded and for a time directed our schools—David, Sands; I, The Free School. He said casually, "I realized it was time to quit when I noticed that when I sat down with a group of kids, they would begin to leave, until I found myself sitting alone."

I have lived through my own version of this truth. From having founded the school that grew into a community nearly thirty years ago, to the stage of giving up everything I had brought into birth so long ago has been a prolonged and profound shock! I am still in the throes of my own second birth/death, but am occasionally seeing this stage more as a possible birth than only a death. I'd better not say any more, since the outcome is by no means assured, and dwelling on it brings up all my doubts and fears and skews the process.

Does making this kind of change mean that either David or I is of no value, no matter what our darkest fears might whisper? That is the temptation to which I have given way over and over which has driven me to despair, and worse, impulses to blame other people—sometimes even to blame the community with whom I have worked so long and whom I love so much! It's a terrifying proposition—damned if you do, damned if you don't. But a thing of my own. I guess it basically has to be faced alone, like birth and death themselves!

A Christmas card arrived at the last moment of putting this final issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ* together which expressed so completely the learning I needed to weather this crisis that I reproduce it here for the benefit of all *ΣΚΟΛΕ* readers. It came from Robert Kastelic, and was designed by his wife Lucy. It showed a boy and a girl by the seashore engaged in an absorbing activity of their own creating. The legend read:

Learn to see through illusions.
Forgive much, forget little, create a lot.

It's been a hard, hard lesson to learn! I'm not saying it has sunk in completely—especially at two in the morning—but I can see that the learning is of tremendous value, and is a necessary preliminary to the rest of my life—and that it is inner work of a spiritual nature that can stand as a kind of paradigm for what we all need to learn in order to bring about the birth of the new millennium we are both facing with a certain amount of dread AND anticipating eagerly as a lodestar by which to steer our lives!

SPECIAL READERS' SECTION:

Appeal from New Zealand:

I wanted to pass along an urgent appeal I just received from a ΣΚΟΛΕ *subscriber in Auckland, NZ. Alas. I was overseas when it arrived, so we missed the deadline for response to the government of New Zealand, but it's still not too late to offer your support to the group that wrote the appeal Susan writes:*

Dear Mary

Attached is a letter I received from an environmental group in New Zealand about plans our government recently announced to start logging virgin beech forests on New Zealand's beautiful West Coast. This is an issue that is not only of concern to New Zealanders, but to the world, as those forests harbour endemic species that once lost are gone forever.

I wonder if you would know the email address of any environmental groups here in the USA who would support the plea to write to the New Zealand government. I would be very grateful if you would send me the email address of just one or two environmental groups, if you know them, so that I can contact them and ask them to forward the plea on to other groups, and hopefully get a significant number of letters from the USA to NZ.

Of course, if you had time to write a sentence or two yourself it would be so helpful. I think we all have to join together to save the remnants of our planet.

Warmest wishes
Susan Grimsdell

Native Forest Action
PO Box 836
Nelson
Aotearoa/NZ
nfa_office@ts.co.nz
www.converge.org.nz/nfa

A Personal Plea On Behalf Of Our Beech Forests

A New Zealand Government-owned company, Timberlands West CoastLimited, have recently released plans to begin a new logging operation involving 98,000 hectares of publicly-owned native forest on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island. Timberlands, with the help of USA's second largest PR firm (Shandwicks), have spent months trying to make the plans for this large-scale logging palatable to the public. All gloss and frosted edges aside, what they are planning is the felling of up to 250,000 trees per year in areas that are the home of many of our threatened endemic species, such as the great spotted kiwi, kaka (large native parrot), kakariki (parakeet), long-tailed bat (one of the two bat species that are NZ's only endemic terrestrial mammals) and several species of native fish.

These forests are ecologically rich lowland forests, of which there are barely 14% left from what covered this country before the arrival of humans. Half of that 14% has already been logged and is undergoing regeneration.

There is no economic, social, environmental or legal reason for logging these remnants of Gondwana. Any logging in these forests poses a significant risk to our global biodiversity and is contrary to our government's commitment to the International Convention on Biodiversity.

And here's a letter I received online:

Dear Mary,

I am a psych student (on hold due to motherhood!), a mother terrified at the prospects of sending my baby to public school, and a person who is concerned about the lives of children and the dysfunctional adults many of those children have become. When I talk to other people at school or other parents they simply say that they went to public school and they turned out fine, or think that my ideas are liberal and radical. Since I am from San Francisco, I get the latter very frequently. Anyhow, I just read an article by John Taylor Gatto, I believe, and I felt my soul light up! Wow, it was like the day I sat in class with a very inspiring high school english teacher and we went over Civil Disobedience or the time I read John Holt's School is Bad for Children or Caroline Bird's College is a Waste of Time and Money!

I am currently thinking about directing my studies toward educational psychology. I am thinking of teaching, also, but I fear that I will be corraled into a group of students who want to keep doing what is being done. Do you have any advice about how I can receive an education that will enable me to cultivate life long learning in children who are currently trapped in the public school system? It is hard for me to bring up the fact that I think making kids do homework is a waste of everyone's time. Everyone says, practice makes perfect and repetition is important. I say if it is boring the children, something is not right.

Also, do you know of any schools like the Albany Free School that exist in Southern California, where I currently live? I want to find an education for myself that will prepare me to teach in a school like yours or to be a renegade teacher in a public school. Also I have been considering online and distance learning options as a way to continue to stay home with my baby. Sorry for such a lengthy e mail, but I feel quite desperate about the state of education. Any response would be helpful!

Thank you,
Jackie Browning
Renata 325@aol.com

I sent on Jackie's letter to the AEROlist and suggested that she join and ask members for help with her worries. Hope she gets that help!

ON-LINE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT A NUMBER OF ISSUES DEALING WITH ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION:

Here's a letter from Bill Ellis (longtime TRANET *editor) which came from a very fruitful exchange with Kimberly Isaksson on Jerry Mintz's AEROlist:*

Dear Mary:

Could the homeschool movement be co-opted?

In a recent Internet discussion on social organizing I used homeschooling as an example of how leaderless self-organizing happens in the social realm just as it happens in cosmic and biological evolution. I pointed out that:

In 1980 a few families started homeschooling.
In 1990 300,000 families were homeschooling.
In 1998 1,500,000 families were homeschooling.

If this 20% increase a year keeps on for another 10 years 24% of all American school age children will be homeschooled. Without powerful leaders, homeschooling is beginning to self-organize. Special services for homeschoolers are growing up without outside design or planning. A couple of organizations have concentrated on legalizing homeschooling. (Since 1993 it has been legal in all 50 states.) A couple of others provide special equipment and supplies for homeschoolers.

Another one or two give tests and certificates for college entrance. There are a few mentors who give aid to homeschool families and find internships for homeschoolers.

Who has decided what services need to be organized?

The growth rate suggests that homeschooling will be a major element of the nation's learning system in a decade. How much has it been discussed by professional educators? By politicians? By leaders? By planners? By futurists?

It seems that even the homeschoolers themselves have ignored the homeschooling movement as the tended to the grassroots needs of the members.

And here in lies the danger.

In an E.F. Schumacher Lecture Oct. 24 [see page 30] I started speculating on what the national learning system might look like if the homeschooling became a major phenomenon. I envisioned world without schools in which "Cooperative Community Life-Long Learning Centers" (CCL-LLCs) replaced the current authoritative monopoly state schools.

My envisioned CCL-LLCs would provide all the services any family needed for self-learning at any age. They would be owned and controlled by the member families. They would include mentors to help find learning opportunities services, equipment, classes, internships, and anything called for by its members. They would have laboratories, equipment, classrooms and other learning facilities. The members would use not only the CCL-LLCs but also the YMCAs, the Libraries, the Museums, the Health Centers, the Farms, the Businesses, the Banks, The Parks, the Streets, Nature, and all other community facilities as part of the learning system.

Something like this is almost happening now.

But what happens when the mainstream, the corporations, the politicians, the press and the professional educators recognize that homeschooling is the coming way of life? The first reaction may well be defensive. Make laws to limit homeschooling, to assure the long life of the teaching profession, and to make money.

A second reaction may be to co-opt homeschooling. Corporations will certainly jump on the homeschooling bandwagon, and peddle whatever they think would be good for corporate America. Politicians will not be far behind. Homeschooling advocates will be meat for Washington hearings, for and against.

The teaching and professional educators will search for ways to keep their political clout and devise new ways to control what homeschoolers do.

It is probably too late for homeschooling to remain invisible. It is also probably to late to head off invasion from the outside. But it is not too late for homeschool advocates to start designing the future learning system of which John Holt, Paul Goodman, John Dennison, Ivan Illich and others dreamed, Hazel Henderson has urged that the economists forget about designing an "Alternative Economic System" and start designing an "Alternative to Economics."

Perhaps the same mode is necessary in this field; it needs to design an "Alternative to Education." It needs to expand homeschooling into a cooperative community life-long learning system.

Bill Ellis, TRANET
PO Box 137, Rangeley ME
04970-0137 USA
(207)864-3784
URL: http://www.nonviolence.org/tranet/

Students' Bill of Rights:

I received following message from Sayoko Ishii an attorney who is enthusiastic in re-thinking education in Japan.

Does any one can help her? Could you please give us information by fax or e-mail?

Kyoko

I am now doing research on the reform of the Japanese education. I have two aims with this reform.

1. Fulfillment and establishment of the educational system outside of the school system.
2. Various reforms (improvement) with (inside) the school system.

Now I would like to investigate students' bill of rights and rights and responsibilities of school students in various countries in order to fulfill no. 2.

In Japan, each school establishes its own rules of the students' school lives (sometimes they even regulate the students* lives outside of school.) which are often called students regulations (rules) or school regulations. However most of those regulations only makes the list of obligations and prohibitions for the students. Students spend their time at school with those strict regulations.

Here I want to make much of the students' rights at school rather than the obligations or prohibitions when I think of the reforms. I think I will be able to make some suggestions on the reforms of the school systems by establishing students' bill of rights. In order to make it successful, I would like to study the present conditions of various countries and I would like you to help me get as much information as possible.

I have heard that in the United States there exists the Students' Bill of Rights in the State Laws and each school or education committee uses it as the foundation. I would like to know more details of the Students' Bill of Rights and also anything on these matters. Thank you.

I will really appreciate it if you give me some information by fax.

Sayoko Ishii attorney
Fax +81-3-3353-0849

Hello my friends,

We are a group of teachers from Athens—Hellas. We are working for 15 years in primary public schools. We are publishing a magazine called *The Island of A-B.* Until now we have published 4 issues. Our intention is to present democratic, libertarian, modern and other alternative schools and articles about libertarian education in other Greek teachers.

We need to have contact with those schools and ask information about them. We also want to organise a meeting in Athens about modern schools--Ferrer.* We wish to colaborate with everyone who is interesting about it.

Maybe you have heard about the resistance of the Greek teachers against the goverment plans. The government, with a new low, wants to take under a tight control the schools the teachers and finally the pupils. Also the goverment forces a new way of teachers' evaluation. Most of the teachers are against those plans.

Last summer the goverment change the way of hiring new teachers and organised some *ridiculous* and opaque examinations.

For these reasons and many more, Greek teachers made strikes. This summer, for a week, we had hard fights with the police, outside schools.

For those reasons we believe that this winter in Hellas will be very *hot*. *The Island of A-B* will be pleased to welcome you in its pages.

cvoulis@mailexcite.com

**The Ferrer Modern School movement is a libertarian educational response to oppressive educational restrictions imposed by the Spanish government and the Spanish Catholic Church which originated in Barcelona, Spain under the leadership of Francisco Ferrer in the early 1900s. When Ferrer was executed on trumped-up charges of conspiracy against the regime, the movement spread to other countries like England and Russia, from whence it came, around the time of the first World War, to the United States, inspired and led by extraordinary anarchists like Jim and Nelly Dick, Emma Goldman and Edgar Taffel. It is inspiring to me to see its spirit still alive in Athens!*

ΣKOΛE has published many accounts and reviews of books and articles about the Modern School movement—and an interview with a graduate of the Stelton School, in Stelton, New Jersey: Jon Scott! You may order this issue of ΣKOΛE—Fall, 1997, volume XIV, No. 4. Jon also organizes a meeting of "Old Steltonites" every year in New Brunswick, NJ, and is a wondewrful friend! If you'd like to correspond with Jon, his e-mail address is jscott@atmos.albany.edu/

Five Alternative Schools briefly described

From Andy Smallman:

Heard this morning on National Public Radio:

In Washington, D.C., only three of 28 proposed charter schools were approved. One of them is "See Forever". The school is run by two former lawyers (David Dominici, son of New Mexico Senator Pete Dominici, and ? Foreman, the son of 1960s civil rights worker Jim Foreman). They work 16 hour days and have given up their lucrative (in Dominici's case) law practices. Foreman was a public defender. "See Forever" has a budget of $500,000 (composed primarily of corporate donations) and twenty students. The students came from the juvenile justice system where they showed interest in changing their lives. They use lots of computers (and the Internet) and stay in school during the "critical" hours of 3:00 - 7:00 p.m. when most juvenile crime occurs. All students have part time jobs working for a catering company.

....

Unity Charter School, a new public school of choice which opened this September with sixty children ages five through twelve in Morristown, New Jersey, is looking for certified teachers who have had experience with alternative education and democratic governance. At this time we need an experienced person (in alternative education) with a certification in Early Childhood Education. Unity is committed to creating a learning environment which will nurture citizens who will look to meet human needs while preserving and restoring our ecosystem. If you are interested, please call the school's Director, Ms. Susan Paynter at (973) 292-1808. Thanks.

Email: unity@gti.net
Website: Unity Charter School

Dear Jerry,

Finally, after three plus years of planning and preparation, Unity Charter School has opened its doors to some fifty families, nine full and part-time staff members, and sixty great kids. The challenges are great, the enthusiasm is high, and the children are happy. We are a mix of alternative and traditional, involved in designing more and more choice and decision making every day. If you know of any certified teachers experienced in alternative education who live in New Jersey who want to work or volunteer in an ecologically focused innovative new school, please send them our way. Our Director, Susan Paynter, can be reached at (973) 292-1808. The more people we can attract with experience in alternative education, the closer we will get to the dream of freedom within form at this school! I say within form because of the regulations we must follow as a public school.

Thanks. And thanks for AERO. I just emailed the article on DemocraticGovernance that is posted on your website to all of our staff.

Lisa Brick
Unity Board President

(Galloway is the school created from the demise of Kilquhanity School, in Scotland):

The Galloway Small School has just celebrated its first birthday in its new home at Carronbridge, Thornhill, Scotland ....trying for a more personal kind of education through doing things as a way of knowing things, and shared activities, especially creative ones.

VIVIEN JONES
vivien@globalnet.co.uk

When we started Liberty School in Blue Hill, Maine, there was a lot of questioning the need for a Democratic Learning Community. Our town already had a highly regarded traditional high school that just celebrated its 100th year. It is the school that most of the people in the area went to and it is the school many of the children want to go to because that's where there parents, grandparents and relatives went.

Liberty School and George Stevens Academy are both private schools but receive tuition from the sending towns—so are students around here who need a different approach, that our existence is not mean to compete but to complement and that we are enhancing the educational opportunities in our area. I also said, however, we are actually the public schools around here. When asked why we were needed, I said there that our approach is fundamentally different. We believe in empowering students, giving them control over their education and their lives. Our open campus is an important part of the curriculum. The involvement in all aspects of running the school from hiring teachings, to serving on the admissions, curriculum, building and maintenance, judicial committees and the daily cleaning of the school is an important part of their education. The school is the curriculum. Our emphasis on how to learn rather than what to learn, solving problems rather than memorizing will better prepare our students for the 21st Century than a school based on the factory system. We are now working on building a student operated cafe called Club Liberty, we are creating a wild life rehabilitation center, we are beginning a 13th year on a working farm called "Homesteading and Community."

We are in our second year and the parents and students are so excited about what is happening that the word is spreading. Though there are people who see us as a place for losers, a place where we all chant together all day and many other false and prejudiced notions, more and more people are hearing how much the kids love the school. They are our best spokespeople. People see a pioneer spirit and are beginning to take notice

We publish a newspaper called Ebb and Flow that comes out once a month. It is a real paper with real stories. We don't put on a "pretty face" but cover stories and issues in the school that are controversial and serious. The paper is honest and bold and we publish a thousand copies and distribute it all over. People are seeing how serious and committed we are to making Liberty School work. And it is working!. People may be critical and dubious, but they also respect persistence and can't ignore students who say how much they love their school.

I need your help on one question. I believe the 13th year is important. It is a transitional year for those not ready to go to college or don't know what they want to do. Learning self-sufficiency skills, how to build a passive solar house, how to live cooperatively, even how to work hard will give students a perspective on life-styles. The board of my school and the people on whose farm the school will be aren't sure there would be enough interest in such a program. It would be a 10 month program and charge between $6,000 and $8,000 including room and board. I'd like some feedback. I'd especially like to hear from high school students. We need 8 to 10 students and plan to open in the spring of 2000.

Please let me know what you think. Do you know young people who would tell me what they think about a program in homesteading and community?

Arnold Greenberg
grnbrg@downeast.net

We are a charter school located in Oskaloosa, KS for "at-risk" high school aged students. The interesting thing is that we are actually a cooperative of five different rural districts who realized there was a population they were not serving and wanted to do something about that problem. So, The John Dewey Learning Academy Charter School was created. We have a strong technology component to our curriculum, as well as an emphasis on service-learning. If you want to know more, our web site is http:nekesc.org/~vista/johndewey/johndewey.htm.

Kathy Gates
kgates@nehub.nekesc.k12.ks.us

EXCERPTS FROM ONLINE DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING A NEW NAME FOR THE JOURNAL WHICH WILL REPLACE ΣΚΟΛΕ

I am reproducing here the gist of an extensive dialogue concerning the name and mission of the journal that will replace ΣΚΟΛΕ. It is not my intention to attempt to include all of the very interesting and passionately held opinions and suggestions made by AEROlist members about ΣΚΟΛΕ and its successor, or even to attempt to reproduce the order in which they were received—since I was away at the time—but to select those comments which seemed to me to carry the essential *to select those comments which seemed to me to carry the essential content of the discussion as it developed online. The comments I selected seemed to me most fully and significantly to represent the flow of the dialogue:*

From Jerry:
Dear AERO-GRAMME subscribers:
This weekend I went to Vermont to meet with Ron Miller who has taken the responsibility to continue publication of SKOLE, the Journal of Alternative Education, at the request of Mary Leue, who has been putting it out since 1985. AERO will have a role in the publication. I met the people who will take over editorship. Are their any SKOLE readers on the list, and if so, what are your suggestions about its future form?

From Ron Miller:
... Both Jerry and I forgot to mention one very important fact. Our idea is call the magazine "Multiple Choice: Perspectives on Teaching and Learning." The subtitle would be featured prominently. Does this make a difference in your perception of the proposed new title? I am looking forward to hearing from many of you.

From John Potter:
SKOLE for me richly reflects the spirit of the publication, and the wonderful Mary who breathed life into it. It also reflects for me a Socratic element, the oldest and finest educational tradition I can think of which I see reflected in many of SKOLE's constituents. It is also the oldest and finest educational tradition I can think of.

Replacing it with Multiple Choice? Multiple Choice? What apalling irony, if serious. It must be a joke. Is the suggestion that SKOLE readers and alternative education folks are that stupid? I'm almost speechless. It's got to be a joke and a sick one at that.

From Ron:
John, I agree with you 100%. More than anything, we want to publish and advocate the passionate commitment to kids that SKOLE, and alt. ed. as a whole, has certainly stood for. We are entirely open to diverse perspectives, from free schools to Essential Schools and Waldorf schools and deschooling and everything in between. What I'm concerned about, is whether our effort to reach uninitiated readers (those who have never heard of Sudbury Valley School, for example) might seem too basic or irrelevant to those of you who turn to SKOLE to connect more

deeply with people and ideas with which 'you're already intimately familiar. We can try to bridge this divide (with passionate AND coherent writing), and count on you to give us your honest feedback.

From John Potter:

Ron: Thanks for the open letter and your response to my thoughts. With regard to your particular concern......." whether our effort to reach uninitiated readers (those who have never heard of Sudbury Valley School, for example) might seem too basic or irrelevant to those of you who turn to SKOLE to connect more deeply with people and ideas with which you're already intimately familiar."

Would you agree that to a certain extent we all are uninitiated? Hence there is something for all of us passionate about kids and their education to learn from each other. I would hope that there is none among us arrogant enought to assert that what we have has all the answers—notwithstanding the fact that we are each doing the best our hearts and heads can summon. Summerhills and descendents, Waldorfs, Essentials, Home schoolers all have something to learn—provided that the essence of the magazine is passionate, thoughtful and open. SKOLE has always seemed very personal to me. The openness of the articles/poetry -whatever, seems to carry a hotline to the heart of the writer and they were usually intelligently written. If I am right and that can be preserved, SKOLE could provide a unique interphilosophical dialogue and learning experience for all. That would be anything but irrelevant it seems to me. From what I've seeen on this listserv and heard in my travels from passionate educators representing diverse philosophical positions the new SKOLE could position itself significantly in the educational reform movement.

From Ron Miller:

An Open Letter To My Colleagues In Alternative Education:

Jerry has been keeping me informed about your reactions to our plans for SKOLE, particularly the new title we're considering. I'd like to explain more about what we have in mind, and find out:more about your concerns.

When Mary Leue announced that she was retiring and was looking for someone to take over SKOLE, I hoped that someone active in the alternative school network would, in fact, take it on. It's too important a publication to lose. It serves an essential purpose keeping folks in this movement connected. When it became clear that no new publisher was waiting in the wings, I volunteered. I saw the opportunity to keep the journal afloat, and further, to help spread the idea of educational alternatives to a larger audience of parents, teachers, and others. At the same time, Richard Prystowsky, a homeschooler and English professor, volunteered to serve as editor but was not in a position to take on the publishing aspects. We seemed like a good team, and I invited him (along with Jerry and a couple other people) to meet with me just a couple weeks ago.

At this meeting, we discussed where we thought SKOLE should and could go. Jerry very clearly pointed out that the roots of the magazine were within the network of alternative schools—that it was an authentic voice for people such as yourselves who are really doing the hard work of keeping these learning options going. It is not an academic journal or slick magazine for the masses. None of us want to lose sight of these roots. However, both Richard and I are interested in helping the alternative education movement grow and have more impact on the culture. We think these ideas should be appealing to many more people. Neither of us are interested only in publishing an in-house forum for the alt. ed. community, which is, let's face it, very small and quite isolated; we don't want to lose that aspect of SKOLE, but we also want to go beyond it. At our meeting, we wondered how we could balance both of these goals.

The name "Multiple Choice" seemed interesting to us because of its irony. Of course it brings to mind the dreadful ritual of standardized testing--but in an ironic way. It flouts this image as if to say "Here's REAL freedom in education." I agree with those who argue that "SKOLE" is meaningful and relevant to the ideas it contains. I am concerned, though, that this meaning would be too obscure to people who are not already within the orbit of alternative schools and homeschooling, people who would otherwise be attracted to what you are doing in education. If this magazine is going to bring in new supporters of educational alternatives, and not only appeal to those few hundred already involved, don't we need to present it in a clear, bold way? If "Multiple Choice" is really that awful, I'm certainly open to other possibilities.

Here is the key question, perhaps: CAN this magazine continue to serve its previous mission, and keep all of you connected in an intimate and meaningful way, while also spreading the message of your work to a less well informed audience? Maybe we're trying to do too much. Maybe SKOLE can't stretch so far without losing its soul. If you think that's the case, then of course I don't want to sacrifice what Mary has built over the years. But then someone else will need to come along and take it over. I am perfectly agreeable to cooperating with someone else who wants to publish SKOLE for readers inside the network, while I attempt to spread the word to thousands of readers outside it. We can work together; as more people discover the wonderful things happening in these schools (and homeschooling), they'll become insiders too.

Please let me know what you think. Can one magazine serve both purposes? If not, are any of you willing to consider taking on SKOLE so that it won't die out?

From Richard Prystowsky (the new editor):

I would like to add to Ron's comments. if I may. Not only do we count on you all to give us your honest feedback, but, in fact, I'm hoping that at least some of you will contribute to our publishing efforts by way of sending us articles, leads, etc.

For the next few days, I have the pleasure of having Mary Leue staying with our family as our guest. She and I have discussed the evolution of SKOLE; it seems clear to me that she is very much supportive of our effort to expand the scope of the journal's readership while also retaining the in-house nature of at least some of the articles' discussions. On the other hand, she is not thrilled about the proposed new title, "Multiple Choice: Perspectives on Teaching and Learning." However, she suggested a title that someone (sorry--I forget who) had suggested to her: "Choices in Education"—with a subtitle to be decided. How does this title strike folks?

In several of my classes (I teach English and Humanities at a community college in California), I've taught alt. ed material, as well as material from the homeschooling so-called "movement." (I'm not sure that I understand the nature of this "movement," though many of us keep referring to a homeschooling movement. Perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of a homeschooling happening?)

Anyway, I've discovered that a number of my students--including those who are current or prospective teachers--are quite interested in this material and want to know more; they also want to know how they or their children can pursue alternate educational paths. From what they tell me, I gather that my class introduced them, for the first time, to SVS, the work of John Taylor Gatto, or information on homeschooling that centered on something other than religious homeschooling.

If the recent mainstream media coverage of homeschooling is any indication (cf, for example, the recent coverage in *Newsweek*), I think that we might safely say that homeschooling and, perhaps, alt. ed. in general has moved into the mainstream enough to give us a receptive audience of serious seekers.

I told Mary--and she herself seems to hold this view (but I don't want to speak for her)—that I'm not interested in converting anyone to anything or in persuading someone of the merits of alt. ed./homeschooling. Rather, I want to help seekers find an appropriate path, and, at the same time, help those already on a good path to gain strength and develop their heart's passion even further, all in the service of advocating for the children—and, ultimately, then, for us all. This, it seems to me, would be the mission, or at least an important part of it, for the journal.

Further, though Mary insisted that she wouldn't get in the way of the journal's new direction (my paraphrase of her point), I reiterated to her what I had written to her in my e-mail messages to her, and what many, if not most, of you seem to feel--to wit, that the journal's appeal and power derived very much from her soul's signature on the publication, and that we very much want her to be a presence, a kind of bodhisattva (in my view), helping us to find our way.

On the other hand, without her doing what amounts to pretty much all of the work, the journal will not be the same, of course. Persons who want it to remain exactly as it has been will thus need to convince Mary not only to NOT give up control of it (sorry for the split infinitive), but also to continue doing just about all of the work on it, including all of the "donkey work," as she phrases matters. Otherwise, I think that we need to expect change, even though we want to remain grounded in the journal's heartfelt and heartening appeal. If we pursue our work with heart and humility, I think that we can succeed in this task.

As an academic, I understand the value of having journals that speak to the already initiated; but as a teacher, I also feel the importance of reaching out to interested, intelligent seekers (as it were). Moreover, as a practicing Jewish-Buddhist, I feel very strongly the need for me to engage in tikkun olam (reparing of the world), and, at the same time, the need for me to remain grounded in beginner's mind. Sometimes, I find it useful to recall Socrates' explanation concerning why agreed that he was, in fact, the wisest person in the world (or was that in Athens?): because, he explains, unlike others, who were convinced that they knew things, he knew that he knew nothing, and that bit of knowledge alone made him wiser than everyone else.

In the hope of (re)joining you all in a new and yet an ongoing journey of peace, humility, learning, and teaching, I look forward to continuing the dialogue.

From Kimberly:

I think they have to keep SKOLE in all references for awhile so people know its history. "Multiple Choice" strikes me as negative. I always think it is better name a movement, magazine, book, by what you are aiming for, not what you are avoiding. Multiple Choice makes me think of a bad test.

I really think just calling it SKOLE and showing the pronunciation is the only way to keep it the same entity. I know alternative educators like change and reform, but if this is a "market decision" then realize that you are cancelling out a lot of name loyalty and recognition. Also, I think it is unfair considering that you agreed to be the ones taking over SKOLE from Mary, and then to change everything—even the title seems like, "why bother?

From Richard again:

This won't be the "same entity," unless Mary continues to run the journal and do nearly all of the work. Anyway, I stated my case in my other post.

By the way, I'm not sure about the "name loyalty and recognition" part of your message. Outside of folks who are within the alt. ed. scene, I've met very few people who have ever heard of, let alone read, SKOLE. The journal does not have a wide circulation; far from it. So, one question, again, seems to be whether or not those of you who have done the hard work for so many years are willing to join Ron, me, and others on this journalistic evolutionary journey (as it were). From the responses that I've been reading, I gather that some of you are not thus willing, but, fortunately, that a number of you are. I certainly hope that we can travel this journey together. You all have so much to teach to so many. To those of you who are reluctant, I ask that you please look within your hearts for the reasons that you've undertaken alt. ed. routes to begin with. This is a journey for the children, for us all, ultimately, for the planet and the cosmos.

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Summing up–from Ron:

All right, we have given up on "Multiple Choice." And although a number of people wanted us to keep "SKOLE," we feel that this name will not attract many new readers. So we've come up with a new idea. What do folks think about this:

Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities

Whatever the title, we are going ahead with planning and should have the first issue out by March 31. Please send us your writing and ideas.

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- Elizabet Sahtouris: Sustainable health and well-being of humanity within the larger living systems of Earth.

- Peter Russell: Innovative vision of humanity—one that integrates science and technology with humanity's eternal quest for harmony and inner peace.
- Shaun McNiff: An emphasis on learning through the arts. Recent books include: *Trust the Process: An Artistic Guide to Letting Go, Art Based-Research, and Earth Angels: Engaging the Sacred in Everyday Things*
- Robert Theobald: Advocate of a new set of goals for the twenty-first century. These include the creation of high levels of social cohesion, better decision-making, a recognition of the importance of all parts of the natural order and ecological integrity.
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For further information about Millennium 99 and to register now, visit http://www.tmn.com/ties/lm99 or call 703-243-6622 United States, EST.

Warmly,
Philip Snow Gang
The Institute for Educational Studies (TIES)
ties@tmn.com

RID-A-HIM

Or Why Are So Many Boys Given Drugs in School?

CHAPTER FOUR

by Chris Mercogliano

Mumasatou, whose adventures I described at great length in my book about the Free School, *Making It Up As We Go Along*,(Heinemann, 1998), was with us from the age of three-and-a-half until she entered first grade at a nearby public school. We hadn't wanted her to go, having advised her mother on more than one occasion that we didn't think Mumasatou was ready to cope class with twenty-five to thirty other kids and only one adult.

Whether it was Mumasatou's choice, or her mother's, or both, we will never know for sure, but leave us she did. And things did not go well. Within days after her public school debut, we began hearing reports that Mumasatou wasn't fitting in. Finally, when her exasperated, and no doubt, overwhelmed teacher sent her packing to the principal's office, Mumasatou apparently ran right out of the building, not to be intercepted until she had already crossed the busy avenue on which that modern brick school so stolidly sits. Rumor has it that this same scenario repeated itself until Mumasatou was taken to the district office for "testing." Within a month I learned from Mumasatou's mother that Mumasatou had been assigned to a suburban school for "emotionally disturbed" children and was taking Ritalin and another drug whose name she couldn't pronounce. Leave it to Mumasatou probably to have set the Albany School District's all-time record for being labeled and placed in a "special education" setting. It didn't take them long, in other words, to get "rid-a-her."

Here is a rare instance where I won't argue with a school system's diagnosis. While I never did find out exactly which label had been officially affixed to Mumasatou in order to justify subduing her with drugs as though she were some sort of escaped rhinoceros, the fact remains that she is a disturbed child. I have a great distrust of all labels; however, the one with which I would go along in this instance would be Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The reason I can tolerate this one particular pseudo-psychiatric tag—which, perhaps not so ironically, is rarely applied to children—is that it ascribes to the problem external, and not internal, causes.

Mumasatou had been deeply traumatized at a very young age. She spent the first three years of her life in the public housing projects of Brooklyn's war-torn Fort Green section, where shootings were a daily occurrence. The move to Albany helped relieve the stress on the family, but by no means eliminated it. Their current inner-city neighborhood has its own problems, and this single-mother-run family of ten can frequently be found in one form of uproar or another.

While I was visiting a friend in the hospital recently, I bumped into a physician I've known for some time. She's the head of this regional medical center's family practice clinic and had heard that I was working on a book about Ritalin. She told me she is shocked by the degree to which Ritalin is currently being over-prescribed.

"But you know," she said, "some of these kids we see in the clinic are genuinely troubled."

I responded with a question: "Of course they are, but is drugging them the answer?"

She hesitated a moment before she replied. "I'm just not sure, any more, and the issue concerns me very much."

"You know," I returned, "of all of the distressed kids I've worked with over the years—the ones who would probably be on Ritalin in other schools—I've never encountered a single one whose life story didn't adequately explain exactly why they are the way they are. This business of organic or genetic pathology is pure nonsense."

Not wanting to get up on a soap box in the middle of a busy hospital corridor, I let it go at that. My doctor friend nodded encouragingly, wished me luck with the book, and we went our separate ways.

* * * *

In *The Learning Mystique,* written over a decade ago by Gerald Coles, the author attempted to debunk some of the mythology behind the educational *bête noire* of that mini-era, the category "Learning Disabled," otherwise known in the trade as LD. Like the purveyors of the ADD label today, LD proponents have done a masterful job of selling the nation the idea that the "affected children" are suffering from some sort of neurological disorder, most likely genetic in origin.

According to Coles, LD originated, for the most part, as a label for middle-class kids. It was devised by our system of public education to stem the onslaught of criticism that broke out in the 1960s, when suddenly a whole new generation of suburban Johnnies was, for reasons unknown, slow to master the fine art of reading. Tried and true explanations like "cultural deprivation" had always worked fine in the past to explain why lower-class children had below-average reading scores in the primary grades, but they weren't likely to go over very well with professional and middle-class parents.

The genius of the LD classification, wrote Coles, is how adroitly it explained away the alleged problem as one caused by a minor glitch in the brain of one kind or another. It established causation as physiological, not psychological, meaning there would be no need to examine whether home, school or other social influences might be contributing factors. Every teacher and school administrator knows that hell hath no fury like a parent made to feel guilty or at fault, so here was the perfect way out. And, perhaps best of all, such a simple, mechanical explanation left the door wide open for the application of a no-muss, no-fuss biomedical solution: "medication."

Here is Coles' own assessment of the results of two decades of employing the LD scheme in American education:

> Fortunately, although learning disabled children are diagnosed and treated in schools and clinics for a condition that appears to be more conjecture than fact, a number of the children have been helped, thanks by and large to excellent teaching that has *not* been based on a neurological diagnosis. Most of them, however, have been helped very little. They enjoy minimal academic success throughout their school years, and as learning failure deepens, so does frustration, disappointment, and insecurity. Their reading and other learning problems are likely to continue into adulthood, with destructive effects on their feelings of self worth, personal relationships, and job opportunities and performance. The personal and psychological turmoil often continues to increase exponentially and, for a learning disabled adult, can reach critical levels. (page xiv)

The only difficulty I have with Coles' otherwise brilliant insight is that his perspective belongs too much to the system of beliefs that views it as a serious problem when children aren't reading by the age of seven or eight. I happen to have a good friend, now semi-retired, who earned two Ph.D.'s and has chaired an entire academic department at the State University of New York, and yet didn't learn to read until he was eleven. Numerous kids who have passed through our doors have had similar experiences. We never considered them to "have a reading problem." And they never did. They simply learned to read when they were good and ready.

At the same time I will be forever grateful to Coles for his painstaking work in re-examining the voluminous "scientific" research upon which the various LD theories of causality are based. In order for their mechanical hypotheses to hold water, researchers first had to claim they had carefully screened their subjects, selecting only "normal" children—children with no emotional problems—for their studies. However, when Coles looked more closely at their chosen subjects, he discovered that only superficial demographic information was considered relevant. "Normal" simply meant that the test subject came from a white, middle-class, intact family with no history of diagnosed mental illness. Upon closer examination, Coles repeatedly found subjects' families to be suffering from all sorts of dysfunctional patterns such as alcoholism and marital strife. Thus, the LD movement's efforts to delete the human dimension from a "disorder" that is altogether societally contrived in the first place were flawed from the outset.

* * * *

In my first book I described how we worked with a "wild child" like Mumasatou without resorting to drugs and labels. Suffice it to say here that we simply attempted to meet her needs as they presented themselves, even when they were extreme. We never for a moment considered her to be defective or deficient, and we didn't blame her for, at times, being so maddeningly difficult. Instead, we began to see her repertoire of trying behaviors as a sort of code language, her only way of telling us where it hurt and why. We assumed it to be our responsibility, as her professional caregivers, to break that code—not her spirit—so that we would best know how to respond to her appropriately and effectively.

Mumasatou was literally crying out for attention. Thanks to ten brothers and sisters, an absent father, and a mother who, after more than twenty years of single parenting, admittedly has little left to give her kids, Mumasatou was suffering from an obvious "attention deficit." Unfortunately, as so many under-nurtured children will do, she had become quite adept at substituting negative for positive attention.

Confronted with a small child who generally refused to conform to any of our routines, relaxed as they might be, we were forced to choose between telling her mother to take her elsewhere, pouring energy into some sort of elaborate control system—or adapting our approach to her unusually urgent needs. While the choice was not easy, we chose the latter. When our old tricks didn't work on the days she was particularly out of sorts, then we had damn well better come up with new ones. In the end, we learned a great deal from Mumasatou, and she learned a great deal from us.

I obviously can't claim that we "cured" Mumasatou, especially in light of her disastrous—and ever so brief—experience in public school, but I can report that she grew and healed and thrived while under our care. Perhaps she would have proven to be more than we could handle, too, had she come downstairs into our elementary school section; but we were never presented with the opportunity to find out. Either way, I am certain Mumasatou's profound level of distress was not neurological in origin. It was her life that was disordered—from day one—not her, and I dread the thought of that proud, creative, intelligent, courageous, caring, young person being drugged up to her eyeballs for the next ten years or more. As far as I am concerned, that is a crime against humanity.

But all of this is somewhat beside the point. The real reason for bringing Mumasatou into the story now is to open up the issue of girls and ADD. Most sources agree that the overwhelming majority of kids who are labeled as such are boys. On the other hand, recent ADD literature, which appears to be growing increasingly defensive as more people question the morality of drugging millions of American children, claims that the boy/girl ratio is equalizing. I have yet to find reliable statistics to back that up.

It's not hard to understand why the ADD people would want the boy/girl ratio to be more equal. The notion of gender-based neuropathology is tough to defend rationally, and science is, after all, supposed to be rational. The only gender-based diseases I know of involve the sexual organs; I've yet to hear of males with breast cancer or females with prostate trouble. So, the idea of an organic brain disorder which singles out boys is pretty tough to swallow.

Pathology aside, common sense tells us why the majority of kids being labeled would be boys—provided, of course, that environmental factors haven't been excluded from the analysis. For starters, elementary school teachers are mainly women, and our society's track record for raising young males with a proper regard for female authority is spotty at best. In spite of all of the efforts and gains of the feminist movement, the denigration of the feminine in the popular culture today is probably worse than ever. Just browse through the tee shirt collection in a low-end beachwear shop at any seaside resort. Or visit the pornography section of your local newsstand, or surf the pornonet.

Then consider the reverse anger—probably not conscious—of females towards the male world that continues to disparage and demean them. Every rowdy, inattentive, overactive, mouthy, stubborn, defiant, disrespectful first- or second-grade boy is a glaring symbol of an eon of male oppression. Is it any small wonder that there might occur a breakdown in the relationship between an adult female teacher and a young male student? How about millions of them?

Next let's take a look at some of the basic differences in the make-up of the young male and female psyche. Here's where the ADD folks absolutely refuse to go; they want nothing to do with that new bastard science of psychology.

In a now classic study conducted in the sixties by the Fels Institute in Yellow Springs, Ohio, researchers studying elementary-age school children found that young girls learn primarily in response to the approval of their teachers. Boys, on the other hand, are motivated principally by the results of their own performance. Their own approval, and, by extension, that of the other boys, is far more important to them than the teacher's. I have observed this to be true even in areas like gymnastics, where the activity the teacher is leading is one that suits the boys' basic natures, and that is something *they* want to be doing. So you can imagine how this fundamental difference in the learning styles of the two genders might play itself out in situations where the tasks are enforced and undesirable to those of the male persuasion. Doesn't this make it easy to see why so many boys would be the ones climbing the walls in modern American classrooms, which have been stripped of almost all physicality?

A friend of mine once suggested to me that girls have a kind of "psychic Ritalin" built into their systems. Because they are, by their very nature, so adaptive, they automatically internalize the control of the teacher—no need for chemical reinforcement here. The dynamic of the conventional classroom, like the military or the modern corporation, requires that the students surrender their own wills, inclinations and internal rhythms. Unlike most corporations and military units, however, the overwhelming majority of classrooms are run by women, and increasing numbers of boys under their command are electing to challenge their authority in the only way they know how, with aberrant behavior and the refusal to pay attention, cooperate and perform.

Now let's say the ADD believers are correct, that the number of girls being labeled ADD is rising. Does this assumption lend proof to their theory that ADD is an organic brain disorder? Actually, when you think about it, it's not hard to imagine why the number of girls being labeled would be growing, too. There are two very powerful forces, neither of which have much to do with gender, coming into increasing opposition of late. Or perhaps more than two. On the one hand, there is the ever-increasing pressure on schools to produce positive educational results, and on the other, the increasing absence of organic adult authority in our culture. Robert Bly describes this phenomenon in his most recent book, *Sibling Society*, in which he states that, due to numerous upheavals in the values of the culture over the past several generations, no one truly grows up any more. This, of course, means there isn't anybody left to play the role of a true parent—hence the book's title. The lack of effective parenting today, writes Bly, is leaving children confused about issues of authority, and it is placing entirely too much power in their young hands.

And then, borrowing from James Garbarino, a noted social scientist at Cornell University, there is the increasing "social toxicity" of our culture. By this Garbarino means "the idea that the mere act of living in our society is dangerous to the health and well-being of children and adolescents ... whose personality, temperament, and life experiences make them especially vulnerable." *(Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment,* page x) While girls may be both genetically and temperamentally more resilient than boys to what Garbarino calls the "rising nastiness" in American culture, they are by no means immune. So why wouldn't we begin to see young girls, as well as young boys, showing signs of increasing distress both at home and in school?

* * * *

Out of the hundreds of children who have passed through the Free School's doors over the past thirty years, I can count on one hand the number of girls who fit the typical ADD profile. This year we only have one "Ritalin girl."

Kayla is five now, having been with us since the age of two-and-a-half. She is a strikingly pretty girl with a soft, olive complexion and large, captivating brown eyes. Sturdily built, she greets the world with a stance that says she expects to be met on *her* terms. Kayla can be unpredictable, aggressive, defiant, sneaky, loud and domineering, and she can already curse like a soldier. Never easily cowed, she is ever a willful, individualistic little sprite.

Kayla's mother was only sixteen when she gave birth to her. Maria's relationship with Kayla's father was short-lived, and Maria frantically struggled to cope with life as a single, teenage mother until she met her present partner. Lamont, two years Maria's senior, is a Free School graduate, and that is how Kayla came to be with us.

In her first year in school, Kayla was a holy terror. She frequently scratched, kicked and bit other children, and she had to be kept in sight at all times. At the absolute low point, the preschool teachers had to tape cotton gloves onto Kayla's hands so that she couldn't injure her playmates with her fingernails. This radical, but also very pragmatic, response quickly convinced Kayla to give up that particularly anti-social form of behavior, and it hasn't been much of a problem since.

Kayla has come a long way between then and now. These days she plays peacefully for hours on end with the other little girls, enjoys reading and being read to, and is sufficiently cooperative to engage in group games and projects. She has joined Missy's kindergarten class and is doing quite well there. Kayla still strikes out occasionally, but seldom unprovoked any more, and she is generally amenable to talking through the problem with her adversary. The protective gloves have long since faded into memory.

An essential factor in her progress, I think, has been Maria and Lamont's willingness to let the school play a supportive role for the family as a whole. Because he spent his formative years in our school, Lamont trusts us implicitly, and he has passed that trust on to his partner. We have somehow been able to dance the delicate dance of suggesting things that this young couple might do differently at home in the way of setting limits for Kayla without causing them to feel like bad parents. We asked Maria to stop spanking Kayla, and threatening and cursing at her when she's had it with Kayla's insistent antics. Conversely, we encouraged Maria not to give in to Kayla if she can possibly help it, but instead to establish consistent, non-physical consequences like sending Kayla to her room when she is disobedient or disrespectful. We also helped Lamont to find ways to intervene when mother and daughter become mired in a futile battle of wills. Finally, we encouraged Maria and Lamont to take time off together. Lamont's mother lives nearby and is often willing to provide the child care so that they can go out dancing or to the movies.

Maria was physically and emotionally abused by both of her parents; therefore, she must address the role of mothering without any good models to guide her. To make matters worse, she was in many ways still a child herself when her daughter was born. Much of what we have witnessed in Kayla's acting out in school has been her mother's fear, her mother's frustration, her mother's rage and grief at never having received the nurturing she needed when she was growing up. Thanks to our, and much more so, Lamont's love and support, Maria has managed to pull herself successfully into adulthood by her own bootstraps. She was able to return to high school and complete her diploma and now has a decent full-time job. Along the way, she and Lamont brought Kayla's little brother into the world, and today, the four of them are busy growing strong roots together.

It is critical for me to emphasize here that the Free School did not, by any stretch of the imagination, rescue this vulnerable young family. They rescued themselves, with our guidance and the help of friends and extended family. Given the sad state of disrepair into which the family in America has fallen, what they have accomplished is nothing short of heroic in my book.

Most importantly, as Kayla's mother has gotten her feet firmly underneath her in the adult world, Kayla has calmed and settled into school life, mother and daughter mirroring each other. Though the birth of a sibling rival momentarily threw a monkeywrench into the works, Kayla regained her balance impressively fast. At the rate she is going, she would probably be capable of managing in a conventional first grade classroom without being drugged. But I doubt she'll have to, because it is likely that Kayla will graduate from the Free School one day just like her stepfather.

* * * *

I'm sorry, but the ADDers' stubborn insistence that home and family have little or nothing to do with the set of attitudes, traits and behaviors that they have placed so high up out of reach on an altar to pseudo-science flies in the face of my twenty-five years of experience as a teacher who also works intimately with the families of my students. If this were just a theoretical exercise, then I could let it go and mind my own business. But it's not. The rising millions of children being force-fed biopsychiatric drugs are testimony to a current reality where the ADDers would rather we tranquilize our children than do what it takes to help create a more tranquil world for them to grow up in.

The risk in saying this kind of thing, of course, is that it can cause the parents of labeled children to feel guilty and at fault. It's a little like uttering the New Age mantra, "You create your own reality" to someone with terminal cancer. Raising kids today is tough enough without the added burden of feeling as though you're a bad parent.

One of the reasons it's so hard is that America does precious little to support families. For instance, other first-world nations have a far better record of providing maternity and child care. As a result, we continue to fall farther behind in areas such as the prevention of infant mortality. The richest nation in the world presently ranks a shameful twenty-first in that statistic, and understanding why doesn't require a doctoral degree. The countries with the lowest infant mortality rates all have government programs guaranteeing every family with children a certain minimum of financial and social benefits in order to insure their kids a healthy environment and good supervision and care.

Meanwhile, here in this country the safety net only continues to shrink. Our deficit-phobic, profit-driven corporate economy has little regard for motherhood, even less for fatherhood, and none for childhood. The end result is an ever increasing number of families reflecting and reinforcing the dysfunctionality of the larger society in a pernicious feedback cycle. To make a long story short, our families are in a bind; our kids are in a bind.

Referring again to James Garbarino and his book on social toxicity, it is the accumulation of risk factors in a child's life—poverty, father absence, minority group status, low parental education, parental substance abuse, dysfunctional childrearing styles, large family size, parental mental illness—that jeopardizes a child's full development. Garbarino cites as proof a study by psychologist Arnold Sameroff showing that most children are resilient enough to cope with one or two risk factors, but that kids with three or more began to suffer significant declines in IQ (pages 151-52).

I would add several items to Garbarino's list: environmental degradation, the demise of the extended family, the medicalization of childbirth, and the ever-increasing encroachment of television and other popular media. The depressing bottom line is that kids have more developmental strikes against them all the time.

All of this, of course, brings us back to the age-old nature versus nurture debate, one which is likely never to be resolved due to the complex interplay of subtle factors involved in determining how we each become the unique individuals that we are. My purpose here is not to try to sway the argument one way or the other, but simply to say that to intervene in the lives of young children such as Mumasatou, or Kayla, or John*, or Ian* without some deeper understanding of their worlds, both inner and outer, is pure folly. It's also bad science. I have all of the empirical evidence I need to claim that every Ritalin kid who crosses the Free School's threshold exists as a solid, three-dimensional manifestation of his or her family's distress.

But it is not the parents' fault.

And it certainly isn't the children's.

Then why are we blaming them?

* Mentioned in earlier chapters, which were published in the winter and spring issues of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*.

Online discussion of ADHD

From Kimberly Isaksson:

Last week, *Newsday* published an article about how the National Institutes of Health panel of experts agreed that certain medications should be used and studied to deal with ADHD in children.

I was pleased to see them publish the letter of a 14 year-old AHDH young man who took offense at the article. And, they also published two letters about it today: one from a mother whose child takes Ritalin and one letter from me!

Here's mine (with their "grammatical fixes", unfortunately) from Long Island Newsday, Wednesday, December 2, 1998

My letter is in response to your article "Treating ADHD." I think the article itself was too much an endorsement of the drug Ritalin. Though, I feel the blame lies largely in the attitude that many "professionals" hold about children who are different.

I wish the article had pointed out that many groups-alternative educators, child advocates, practicers of holistic medicine, etc.-- are very against the whole concept of calling children ADHD. Even if this disorder does exist, there are far too many children being diagnosed and drugged for it.

In many ways, ADHD children are probably children who are bored with the sedentary aspect of traditional schooling. Some children with symptoms we call ADHD are actually so intelligent in some areas, that they have trouble following rules, coloring within the lines, and/or managing their own genius.

The hallmark symptoms mentioned in the article-"the inability to sit still, impulsivity and distractibility"-could all be indictments of a school system that requires too much sitting, not enough creative action, and boring busy work that no child would be motivated to focus on.

It is also morally repulsive for the experts to admit that there are no long term studies on the effectiveness of this drug. So are we giving our children an untested drug? To save teachers from the hard work of creating stimulating learning environments or to save us from the aggravation of a high energy child who asks lots of questions?

A final thought—Dr. Mark Vonnegut, one of the experts, was quoted as saying, "You know these kids, they stick out like a sore thumb." Well, I bet you Einstein did, too.

From Joe Nathan:

Good for Kimberly. I really like your letter re ADHD. You noted that some of these kids are bored and frustrated by traditional schooling. You will be interested (and I hope pleased) to know that a University of Minnesota study found that a number of kids who had been classified as learning disabled in large traditional secondary schools did fine—and were no longer disruptivez—in smaller alternative schools.

Also, I've talked to kids and parents who formerly were classified as ADHD, and then went to small alternative or charter public schools. They are doing very well because as Kimberly points out, the traditional schools were NOT a good place for them.

So—who is more troubled—the kids or the schools? While of course it's not all on one side, I'd say a LOT of change is needed in schools—and families need many more high quality options.

From Ron Miller:

Great letter,Kimberley! It's so important to get this perspective out into the public. Right now, Chris Mercogliano of the Albany Free School is writing a very powerful book on this issue, and I am hoping that it will be picked up by a major publisher. Maybe if a large number of us in the alt. ed. network write letters of support, it will convince some publisher that this is worth picking up.

Where To Go To School

Go to a school that is small, if you can
Go to a school where the leaders are wise and happy and care about you.
Maybe, they even know you.
Go to a school with a mission:
Religion or football
PTA Dances or class gardens
Anything.
The focus will draw people together.
Go to to a school where if you are crying on the bus the first day,
They will let your mommy drive you instead.
Or, the bus driver will coax you with a friendly smile.
Or, maybe there is no bus at all.
Go to a school where people can see you for yourself.
It would be ideal if there were no grades.
But, at least, when you make something, people appreciate it.
Go to a school where if you are bad,
They will first check your temperature,
Explore your feelings,
Do anything
Besides secluding or drugging you.
Go to a school where your mom and dad feel welcome.
Well, maybe they started the school, or maybe the parents run it.
Certainly, the teachers respect them and encourage them to visit.
Go to a school that allows you to hold on to your Truth.
Go to a school where you can feel safe and *be* safe,
Until you are old enough to create your own security.
Look for a school with lots of real books.
Books are almost always filled with magic pebbles or friendly animals.

Stories the old people used to tell children when we all lived together as families.
Look for a school with lots of:
Windows, teddy bears, green plants, smiling grown-ups, and good food.
Where you can feel
Believed, nurtured, respected, valued, listened to.
And,
When you grow up, find a
Neighborhood, community, workplace, and family that
Helps you feel this way, too.

by
Kimberly Isaksson
July 1998

SOUTH STREET CENTRE
A Model For Community-based Education
by Betsy Herbert

What is South Street Centre?

South Street Centre is a turn-of-the-century redwood house on Highway 9 in Boulder Creek. It has a wonderful Italian landlord, who brings us fruit from his orchard and vegetables from his garden. We have been renting the house from him for eleven years. It has high ceilings and big windows with lots of light streaming in. The kitchen is large and welcoming. The front room has a piano. There are sofas, tables, and cozy conversation-corners. The playyard has swings, a slide, a sandbox under a big oak tree, and a playhouse. Bats live in the attic and swoop out as it turns dark on summer evenings.

Who comes to South Street?

Betsy and her Young Homeschoolers; Estelle and her K-12 gang from Charter 25 Homeschool Program; families; mothers and toddlers; community activists, college students, apprentices, public and private ISP homeschooling educators.

What do they do there?

There are common threads in all of our programs. The timing and rhythms of all of our offerings honor the home life of the families who attend them. We never start a session before 10:30 am. We always have a meal or a snack midway through our time together. Public speaking via Sharing Circle is central to our teaching, giving everyone a chance to speak and be listened to. There is a balance between indoor and outdoor play and between activity and integration time.

Estelle and her K-12 gang arrive at 10:30 on Thursdays. Activity centers are set up with art supplies, games, and manipulatives. The real "curriculum" is finding out what you want to do. Estelle inspires and encourages conversation. For the last half-hour of the day parents are invited to join the activities.

Betsy and Estelle share with them observations and perceptions about their children.

Families come to afternoon Family Teas. We provide resources and materials for families to use. At about 3:00 High Tea is served.

Mothers and toddlers come to Play Groups to play, talk, vent, commiserate, and observe their own and each other's children.

Community activists come to Valley Women's Club meetings to address a whole slew of issues, such as how to keep our valley environmentally healthy, stable and sustainable.

College students come to do community service and field work for community studies.

Apprentices come to learn and practice a style of education that includes children as equal partners in its creation.

Public and Private ISP Educators who work with homeschooling families in Santa Cruz County and contiguous counties come to Conferences seeking updates, knowledge, inspiration, networking and just plain old energy to go on with their work.

How did all this come to be?

Betsy and Estelle were educators before becoming mothers. We met when our sons were babies and formed a friendship that included raising children and making community. From the early 70's to the mid 80's we searched high and low for settings in which to blend our educational ideals with what we were learning by paying attention to our children. We invented a few settings ourselves, at swimming holes, in each other's kitchens and on our decks, and at Sandpile Play Group. We also tried out some institutional environments: Public Kindergarten and the Rec Center, for brief periods. The place that we found to be most in tune with the needs of our children was a local YMCA Camp. There we explored athletic, artistic and recreational activities. The parents worked in the kitchen, on the maintenance staff and as naturalists, and the children joined us at some of these jobs.

This family-centeredlife-style was not yet called Homeschooling. In the mid-70s, John Holt stopped advocating for reform in the public schools and began urging parents to stop sending their children off to school. When we saw the first issues of Growing Without Schooling and realized that we were part of a "movement", we were astonished, hopeful and jubilant.

Our children grew, deriving their education through various cultural pathways: parent coops, part-time attendance at public and private schools, martial arts dojos, tutoring, and classes in the arts, all the while maintaining a strong family base and structure. By their mid-teens, our children had all chosen to attend school. Betsy and Estelle followed suit, reconnecting with our educator-selves. Looking for ways to institutionalize our ideas and ideals South Street Centre was born in 1987. We inherited our building from a small private school and began to develop a Centre to reflect the homeschooling life-style and incorporate a feminine psychological structure.

In 1990 Estelle became a resource teacher for the newly-formed San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District Homeschool Program. South Street became a contracted service of that program, ensconced in the school district, yet independent. Estelle became the school district liaison to South Street and Betsy became South Street's administrator.

We went our separate ways—but we didn't separate. We used all the resources of our longtime friendship and our commitment to feminine-based education to make South Street survive with its own direction, philosophy, and structure. Estelle's public school homeschoolers come to the Centre and Betsy has developed programs for the private sector.

What is the structure of South St. Centre?

South Street Centre is registered as a private school, and files an R-4 with the County Office of Education. As a business, it is a sole proprietorship.

Betsy and Estelle are the co-founders of the Centre and continue to be the co-directors. We have monthly staff meetings to plan and review the activities., programs, and facility issues.

Betsy is the administrator of the business, the building and the programs. She runs private programs which serve families from several district ISP's, as well as independent homeschoolers Estelle is the advisor to South Street from the school district Through her, Charter 25 contracts a one-day-a-week program a the Centre, bringing about 60 folks a month to South Street.

How is all this funded?

Our funding comes from:

- contract with San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District
- private tuition
- donations and grants
- in-kind services from families, friends, and interns

What resources and materials do we use?

- games: board games, classical strategy games
- art materials: paper, pens, crayons, paints, collage, stamp-art, murals, card-making, clay
- manipulatives: Legos, Zoobs, doll house, blocks, animals
- conversation
- books: picture books, classics, reference, literature for all ages
- puppets
- musical instruments
- playground equipment: swings, slide, sandbox, playhouse
- garden
- kitchen: cooking projects for all ages

What are our hopes & creams for the future?

Our shared dream is that South Street will grow to offer programs that support the continuum of life; education that is intrinsically feminine in nature. More immediately, we would like to provide support for post-partem mothers, cultivate intergenerational learning activities, and develop a class in getting what you want from your community. We would love to have an adequately paid staff, fully-funded apprenticeship and internship opportunities, and an expansion of our facility. We dream of a lively connection between our learning centre and other community cultural places such as the library, recreation center, organic farms, art/science centers and theatre.

We hope that the model of South Street Centre can inspire you to realize your own visions and dreams for novel and unique home-schooling institutions.

POETRY IN MOTION: RISK TAKING, COLLABORATION AND REFLECTION

by Marcia Brightman and Jane Costello

Mark's Meadow Laboratory School
813 Notth Pleasant Street
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27 October 1998

Dear Editor:

For the past year we have been part of a three-way collaboration to bring poetry and movement into the classroom. We are a third grade teacher, a laboratory school facilitator and a library media specialist witb a keen interest in experimenting with the link between children's kinesthetic involvement and their creative expression. As a result of our interest, we launched a weekly "Poetry in Motion" session with a classroom of third graders whose experience led us to hone our approach until we evolved a reasonably predictable plan. The manuscript we enclose is a condensation of the best of that year of experience.

We request that you consider our manuscript for publication in your journal, (which, by the way, our school library subscribes to.) Please feel free to contact us during school hours. Thank you for spending time with our article.

Sincerely,
Marcia Brightman
Jane Costello
Mark's Meadow Laboratory School
Amherst, MA

During a rare lunch break when we actually sat down to eat and chat, Marcia and I discovered that we both had a strong interest in movement as a source for health, personal growth and creative expression. I shared my desire to find new ways to integrate an extensive background in dance and movement with my work in our elementary laboratory school and described my experience with writing and drawing through movement. Marcia, a seasoned teacher of English and published poet, talked about her own experience of using movement as a source or preparation for writing. It was this unexpected moment of commonality that gave birth to our collaboration for "Poetry in Motion".

The groundwork for a classroom setting had already been laid. The previous year, our third grade teacher Susan had accepted a Hampshire College intern into her classroom to conduct movement sessions. These built up to a collaborative performance with the seniors in a nursing home whom these third grade children visited on a monthly basis as part of their Community Service Learning initiative. Some of the children then opted to participate in an intergenerational improvisational group, which Sue visited. She was sold on the value of movement as a learning tool and as a bridge for intergenerational contact.

Knowing that movement can be a great source of inspiration for creative writing and believing that there needed to be more opportunities for creative movement and body awareness activities in school, we approached Susan with our idea to combine movement with poetry writing instruction. Both she and her graduate intern received the idea enthusiastically.

The constraints of busy schedules made it imperative that the collaboration not add significantly to an already heavy workload for Susan. Marcia and I decided to use our lunch times to plan and then to check in briefly with Susan to make sure our plan sounded workable to her. She would then choose to follow up the activities we conducted in whatever ways she found appropriate.

Initially we took a highly exploratory approach. Sometimes the writing would be rich even after the movement activity had seemed shaky. Sometimes the writing would not be particularly interesting although the students appeared to be thoroughly engaged in the movement. After about six sessions our presentations settled into a format that worked more consistently. We had evolved a threefold approach to our lesson planning whereby we offered in each session a theme, a related movement activity and a focus on a poetic form or element. Children always had the option to follow their own inspiration if it differed from the theme we offered to them. For most children, though, we found that the thematic movement functioned to help them to shift into a freer and less school-bound mode of expression. This then allowed for unexpected images and fresh literary expression. Providing them with a poetic form or focus on some poetic element helped them to shape the wealth of content evoked by the preparation activities.

We used some recurring motifs in our preparation activities. The sound of a chime, a greeting and a brief description of our goals and activities for the day signaled most session beginnings. Then we read aloud a poem Marcia had selected as an example of the theme or model of the poetic element we'd chosen. Often we engaged in verbal brainstorming with a large sheet of paper. This functioned to provide a source of written language for children when they sat down to write, as well as to charge up the exchange of ideas and images among the children. Often the verbal brainstorming provided material for creative movement explorations as well.

Most movement activities began in a large circle. This form provided a sense of containment as well as shared participation. Sometimes we were fortunate to have use of the gymnasium, but many of the sessions were conducted in the classroom with desks pushed to one side. We used Sue's large beach ball, a small hand drum, and a tape player as movement props, which appeared in recurring sessions, though not each time.

In order to embark upon our first collaborative explorations we had to be willing to make mistakes. An example of one of those early lessons was one in which we chose color as a theme. We began with passing a giant beach ball to music in slow motion with eyes closed. We thought this would quiet children down in preparation for a guided imagery experience that focussed on color. What we discovered was slow motion was difficult for young children, as was closing their eyes. Necessity forced us to modify this activity mid-stream, and we discovered that using body parts such as heads and shoulders to move the ball helped children enter into slow motion. Moreover, some children had a physically active response to the guided imagery. Nevertheless, some wonderful images appeared in their writing that day: "white wedding gown," "ruby green blob collapsing and falling away," "red pizza with barbecue sauce and onions," "brown—I look good in my suit," and "pink marshmallows."

When we reflected on the lesson, we noted that not only were the movement activities developmentally difficult, but also they did not connect thematically to the exploration of color through guided imagery. Being able to talk about our lessons afterward was crucial to our willingness to continue and to sharpen our focus. We were also grateful for Susan's faith and patience.

After several lessons, we intuitively arrived at the integration of a movement activity with a poetic structure and a theme. We chose the theme of body parts and the form of simile. The preparatory activity involved moving isolated body parts to rhythmic music. Following this, children moved to a drum, then froze, emphasizing a particular body part each time the drumming stopped. We asked them to look around and say what images came to mind each time they saw each other's frozen positions. Some of the images they came up with included: "an old man," 'lost in the woods," "holding a balloon," "the Statue of Liberty," "a bridge," and "a runner ready to race." When it was time to write, children were given the form, "My (body part! is like a —," which we borrowed from *Beyond Words: Writing Poetry With Children*, Elizabeth McKim and Judith Steinbergh's invaluable book. The children quickly responded to this assignment, producing some intriguing results. "My arms are like a branch on a tree." "My fingers are like little bugs swirling around."

The tenor of our planning changed as our clarity increased. We began to choose a poetic structure as the starting point for our lessons. Themes would often be generated from the classroom curriculum. The movement activity would emerge from these elements. Sometimes it would take a couple of days of back burner thinking for the movement activity to become clear. While I was developing the movement activity, Marcia would search for or in some cases write the poem which illustrated the integration of the theme and form. Often the experiences we started in class were finished later in the week with Susan's guidance.

As the success of our lessons became more predictable we decided to expand the work to include the seniors at the Adult Life Enrichment Center whom the children had been visiting on a monthly basis. We received a Community Service Learning grant which enabled us to kick off our poetry in motion collaboration with a movement and poetry performance of the Dance Generators, a local intergenerational performing company with some senior members. The company performed their show at the Adult Center for the senior day guests and the children. We followed the performance with two visits to the center. Marcia and I conducted poetry in motion workshops with the seniors using the themes of memories and hands. Five third grade children came with us to the center and acted as scribes for the seniors who had difficulty writing. The children compiled a booklet of poems that they had written during the year with us and included some of the poems the seniors had written as well. The culminating event of the project brought us together at the center to celebrate our writing with a poetry reading followed by refreshments and distributions of booklets.

As we look ahead, we plan to continue our collaboration, possibly with an additional age group and classroom. Our goal is to inspire other teachers to explore the use of movement as preparation for writing, to include them more consistently in our reflection process, and to encourage them to initiate movement and writing activities on their own.

Jane Costello
Marcia Brightman

A GRAPHIC DEMONSTRATION OF DEMOCRACY FOR A NEW CHARTER SCHOOL

by Jerry Mintz

The Renaissance School is a new charter school started by a group of parents in Lakeland, Florida. Immediately upon their opening, they ran into serious trouble. The master teacher whom they had hired to train other teachers and lead the school in an alternative direction had a nervous breakdown within the first week of the school and left the school before two weeks were up. Two other teachers followed. From then on the group of parents and teachers were playing for simple survival. There were about 85 students in the school from kindergarten through fifth grade. Many of these students had come to this school after having serious problems in other schools. The parents who sent their children to the school did so for a wide variety of reasons and had many different educational philosophies.

Just before Christmas the parent administrator of the school, Mari-Jean Melissa, found AERO on the Web and contacted us, asking for help in finding a new master teacher. We did the best we could, but it was hard to find such a person in the middle of the school year. We suggested that the teachers visit some other alternative schools in Florida which we thought were good examples but they were never able to find the time to do so. They also talked about bringing me down there to do a consultation with the staff.

Meanwhile, the older group of students at Albany Free School was planning its major field trip for the year. They wanted to combine this with participation in the annual conference of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools which was to be held at Upattinas School in Glenmoore, Pennsylvania. However, the group ran into trouble because Chris Marcogliano, co-director of the Free School, who drove last year's group on a major trip, was not available to do so this year, and their teacher, Lex Bhagat, grew up in New York City and does not have a driver's license.

Three of the students in that group had gone with me to a regional NCACS conference in Vermont last October and two of them had worked as interns in the AERO office for a week. Those students knew that I had taken groups on similar trips when I directed my school in Vermont, so they called to ask me if I would drive them on this trip. I hadn't taken a driving trip in years with such a large group—12 people—certainly not since I had been hospitalized with a ruptured disc three years ago. Also, I was very busy with the work on AERO and had no time for such a trip. So they managed to talk me into it anyway.

I contacted the school in Florida to see if they might be able to cover some of the traveling expenses of the group in exchange for our doing a demonstration of democratic decision-making for the school and meeting with the staff, students, and parents. The Renaissance School was very excited about the idea and said they would be glad to do this. Meanwhile, the Free School students organized two major fundraising events: a fish fry, and a play which they co-wrote with their teacher and performed twice. They raised nearly $2,000 with the combination of these events; $500 of it needed to go toward conference expenses for the NCACS, which in itself was a considerable reduction in the usual price; $185 went to replace the salary of Bree, the cook, who is a friend of Lex, since I wanted a woman staff member to come on the trip because the group is co-educational. After expenses, this left about $950 to be spent on the rest of the trip to Florida, with Renaissance agreeing to cover $450 worth of expenses. Although this averaged out to only about $7 a day per person, we managed to make it work in inimitable Free School style by spending virtually nothing for sleeping, staying mostly at alternative schools we knew along the way, camping out, and getting some donations such as tickets to see Marineland. South of the Border in South Carolina, just south of the North Carolina border, is a tourist site which has motels, rides, miniature golf, etc. We broadcast our radio show live from there and they donated two large rooms for the group to stay in with their sleeping bags.

Other stops we made along the way included Heathcote Community in Maryland, a community that is based on the concept of permaculture. They gave us a tour of their grounds and showed us a lot of their environmentally friendly techniques of composting, solar energy and water conservation. On the way back we visited Grass Roots Free School in Tallahassee. We had a wonderful visit there. We stayed at Lex's brother's house in Atlanta and the next morning visited the Horizon School in Atlanta. Horizon has continued its remarkable program of building inexpensive buildings with staff and student labor, the latest of which is a beautiful theater.

Upon arriving at the Renaissance School, we had a day to get acquainted with the situation because the school had planned a trip to a new museum that features artifacts from the Titanic. Four of the students from our group went with them to that exhibit in St. Petersburg. The rest of the group went to the beach on the Gulf coast. The group that went to the Titanic exhibit so interested the parents who chaperoned them that they decided that they wanted to spend the days at the school visiting us when we did our presentation. We had organizational meetings as we drove along in the van and at the school itself, preparing for our presentation. As much as possible, we wanted to immerse them in the democratic Free School experience.

On Thursday, the entire school was shepherded into their biggest room. Our group made a circle in the middle and the students and staff of the Renaissance School surrounded us. At first, the school said that they wouldn't have the younger students since they are a K to 5 school, but we thought they should be included in the process so the younger ones came into the room also. First I made a general introduction, talking about the different kinds of alternative schools. Then two of the Free School students, Ted and Zack, talked about the Free School and the council meetings, which we were about to demonstrate. Shortly thereafter, we organized a council meeting on a real issue that was bothering the group, as a demonstration of how we dealt with these problems. There were two nominations and Jessica was elected chairperson. She asked who called the meeting. I said that I had, because some people in the group had been keeping others awake late at night by talking and making noise.

The discussion started with Candace saying that she was up late because some people had seen something out the window that scared them, and they talked about what they thought they saw. Then somebody brought up the fact that Candace had had coca-cola in the evening and perhaps that was what had kept her awake. Several of the group expressed their ideas and opinions about the problem. After five or ten minutes of discussion a little hand went up about four or five rows deep, outside of the fishbowl. It was Israel, a blond-haired seven-year old Renaissance School student. We stopped our process for a second and I asked him if he was able to understand what was going on. He responded that, yes, he could understand it and furthermore, he thought he had a solution to the group's problem. Some of the Renaissance teachers were clearly stunned. We invited Israel into the group and within a short time there were another half-dozen Renaissance students who had joined the inner circle and were participating in the meeting. This demonstrated, graphically and palpably, that for these students who had never seen a democratic meeting before, this process was a very natural one for them, one in which they immediately felt comfortable in participating. On other days and at other times, I've seen the school noisy and somewhat chaotic, but for this entire process, you could have heard a pin drop. The students clearly realized that this was an important event that they were witnessing and they wanted to understand every bit of it.

In the end, the group made two or three proposals concerning the problem. One was that there was to be no drinking of any beverage with caffeine in it after five o'clock in the afternoon. This included staff members drinking coffee also. It was also decided that there would be a quiet time, after which people would either go to the sleeping area or go to another part of the school if they were going to stay up later. Candace would be the enforcer for the bedtime rules. I should add that Israel's idea was that everybody should have a separate sleeping place so that the noise wouldn't bother them, but it was pointed out that considering the situation of the group that it wasn't very practical.

After the demonstration meeting, the Renaissance School group was divided up into five smaller groups, each of which was led by two members of the Free School group. The task for each group was to bring up one issue that they considered to be a problem. It could be a personal issue or it could be a problem with the school itself. They would have a discussion on it and perhaps have some motions on proposals for solutions. The groups met for about half an hour. The issues brought up ranged from problems between individual kids to the problem of noise in the school. Some of the groups came up with proposals and others didn't get quite that far, but it seemed that every group was quite successful in the process and this was all reported to the big group when we came back together. This brought us to lunch time. For the rest of the day most of us were involved in discussions of the process that had taken place in the morning with various groups of staff members and parents. These lasted until about five-thirty in the evening.

The following day, each of the students in our group taught a class, either singly or in pairs, and all of the students in the school were able to choose which ones they wanted to attend. These included classes on the use of the Internet, a phys ed class on basketball, an art class, a music class, and an acting class. Later in the day the acting class actually performed a play they had created. The dance class demonstrated the dance steps they had learned. The concept that students could teach classes was certainly established. Also established was the concept that students could effectively choose the classes they wanted to attend, based on interest rather than age or grade level. This was again followed by meetings with staff and parents. Also, they had brought a ping-pong table into the school the previous day and I taught a lot of the students table tennis. One of my classes had 35 students in it, the most to whom I've ever taught beginning table tennis. Late in the second day, I was able to teach some techniques to the phys-ed teacher so that he'd be able to continue that process. As I've said in the past, I like teaching table tennis because it is so non-academic and unthreatening, but that through it students learn that they are able to learn something well that is new.

Although it went quite smoothly, some parents were upset, especially when some children came home and announced that the Free School kids could do whatever they wanted, and could swear and say anything they wanted. A few of the parents gave instructions that their children were not to have contact with the Free School students. The teachers and administrators did the best they could to communicate with those parents to alleviate their concerns. Our feedback from the school since that time has been that the school was considerably inspired by our visit and all of the teachers have subsequently been able to use the democratic decision- making process with their groups.

When we were visiting the Grass Roots Free School on the way back, we broadcast our radio show from there and Pam, one of the teachers from the school called in to the show to express her appreciation for what we had brought to them. She said that the very next day she had used the process in her classroom and it had worked very well. It was chaired by a boy who happened to see us when we were eating at a local salad bar in Lakeland. The boy had been very disappointed that we weren't going to stay around the school for any longer. I was told that this boy had often been a "trouble-maker" at the school. It is not surprising that given the chance many of these "trouble-makers" become positive leaders.

On the radio show, Pat Seery, the founder and director of the Grass Roots Free School, was also a guest, and the interaction between Pam, from the Renaissance School, and Pat was great, as she asked him a number of questions about how they ran their school. Incidentally, the Renaissance school is still looking for teachers for next year who have experience in alternative education. AERO, through the Free School group or other schools, is interested in doing similar workshops for schools interested in democratic decision-making process. Contact us if you are interested in being part of this process.

By Wednesday we reached the NCACS Conference at Upattina's School in Glenmoore, Pennsylvania. About 150 students and teachers participated in this year's conference. Groups attended from as far away as Japan, with Kazuhiro Kojima of the Global Free School bringing a group of eight people. There were also groups from Laurel High School and The Farm, both in Tennessee, Pedro Abilzu Campos High School in Chicago, and Clonlara School in Ann Arbor, Michigan. There was a day of field trips to Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Dutch area, and other places. There were some other unusual events, such as sheep shearing and a sweat lodge.

John Gatto visited the conference and spoke that evening at Haverford College. One of the Free School students was very taken with Gatto's concepts, very struck by his idea that the public school system is accomplishing just what it was designed to accomplish: educating 20% of the population for leadership positions and dumbing down the rest to be followers.

After the conference, I drove the group to Albany where I did a last radio show on the road, interviewing one of the students and Chris Mercogliano about his new book about the Free School. AERO has copies to sell of Chris's book about the Free School, Making It Up as We Go Along. Send $21 to AERO, plus $3 for postage, or order by credit card by calling us at 800 769-4171.

The story of one school with the courage to put students' welfare *first*

Making It Up as We Go Along

The Story of the Albany Free School

Chris Mercogliano

Foreword by
Joseph Chilton Pearce

Making It Up as We Go Along
The Story of the Albany Free School
Chris Mercogliano
Foreword by Joseph Chilton Pearce

Making It Up as We Go Along is the story of the Albany Free School, a school based on real freedom, real community, real democratic principles, and real affection between teachers and students. Thanks to this ongoing experiment in education, one of the longest running of its kind in America, Chris Mercogliano has come to understand how children learn and above all, how important autonomy and authenticity are to the learning process.

There is no preset methodology because Mercogliano and his students make it up as they go along. What the author does do is render into words some of the possibilities that abound when teachers and students learn together in an atmosphere of freedom, personal responsibility, and mutual respect. He proves that teachers can help all students pursue their genius and their dreams through the union of self-direction, excitement, joy, and emotional honesty.

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And here's an excerpt from a 1998 E.F. Schumacher Society Lecture by Bill Ellis, longtime editor of TRANET. It felt to me as though it needed full article space, because of the breadth and depth of its scope:

THE GAIAN PARADIGM

Cooperative Community Life-Long Learning Centers

by Bill Ellis, TRANET

* As the 21st Millennium opens there is a mood for change in society. To some extent this is a holdover from the Biblical admonition of "a second coming." To some extent it is a growing angst over the failures of modern society to live up to the potential for justice, equity and a good life for all that is possible within the technological advances of the fading millennium. A third element is the hope for the future that is now rising as a deeper understanding of the cosmos, and humanity's place in it, is being revealed by modern science. In this essay I want to grasp this mood for change, particularly within the new science/social mindset, and envision the learning system that could emerge if we let it happen.

* My starting point I will call The Gaian Paradigm. Gaia is the Greek Goddess of the earth. The word Gaia started taking on new scientific meaning in 1972 when space scientist, James Lovelock, and microbiologist Lynn Margulis collaborated in developing what they later called The Gaia Hypothesis. What they found, and many other scientists have later confirmed, is that the Earth acts as a self-organizing life-like entity. The atmosphere, the soils, the level of salt in the ocean, the amount of oxygen in the air, the balance or solar radiation reaching the earth, and all other qualities that make life possible on Earth are carefully controlled to be just right to support life. No other planet yet observed has that unique ability. The mechanism that controls all these quantities is life itself.

* The Gaian Paradigm suggests that all cosmic evolution is ruled by the same laws as biological evolution. That everything is dependent on everything else. This is radically different from the Dominator Paradigm on which society has been organizing for the past 2000 years or more. The Dominator Paradigm instilled the values of self-interest, survival of the fittest, competition, materialism, and greed.

* The Gaian Paradigm suggests that everything is interdependent. Nothing dominates anything else. The cosmology from the Big Bang through the formation of atoms, molecules, cells, life forms, and human society follow the same pattern. It is a steady transition from simpler entities self-organizing to become more complex ones, all interdependent.

* The human body is a good metaphor for this evolving system. The cells are organized into organs, and organs into the human body. In like manner society is made up of cells, social organizations, and the social body.

* The Gaian Paradigm provides us a new mind set with which to envision the future. There is not a clearer expression of the Gaian Paradigm than the emergence of homeschooling and its potential for a major transition from the current schooling system to a community life long-learning system.

Schooling

* An increasing number of educational critics like 1991 New York teacher of the year, John Taylor Gatto in *Dumbing Us Down,* have decried the schooling system. They point out that early American schools were strict disciplinary centers in which students sat stiffly at their desks in abject obedience while stern teachers taught them the three Rs by rote memory. Its purpose, at least during this century, has been to prepare workers for an industrial culture. It worked well. Laborers in American mills and factories surpassed all others in bringing wealth to our nation.

* The critics contend that it is the form of schooling that is now teaching the wrong lessons. The monopoly state schools restrict the individualís natural curiosity and desire to learn. They teach authoritarianism, self-repression, and strict obedience to the clock. The teacher, under controls set by the state, and now the national government, determines what is to be learned. The clock and the calendar determine when and how long a child can learn it. Much of this criticism of schooling has been reflected in a report to the president, "A Nation at Risk."

The Age of Chaos

* Well before the current attacks on schooling and educating, John Dewey and other philosophers assailed this concept of education with their creeds of "learning by doing" and "child centered

education." Although the philosophy of education changed, the form didn't. Children still gather in rooms of 20 or more; each one trying to do his or her own thing. The result is that neither teaching nor learning is possible. Many schoolrooms become centers of confusion. Education is now at the edge of chaos, ripe for a radical transformation.

* One element of the reorganization of learning started two decades ago when some families started taking corrective actions one family at a time. It was called homeschooling. These actions grew in concert with Paul Goodman's urging that schools make more use of community facilities and issues, with Ivan Illich's seminal book *Deschooling Society*, and with John Holt's *Instead of Education* (1976), and *Growing Without Schooling* (1977) on how children learn.

* In the beginning, only a couple of decades ago, homeschools were autonomous family units, each one setting it own curriculum, and providing its own supplies and services. These homeschooling units are the cells on which a new learning system could grow. They typify the basic cells of any system governed by the Gaian Paradigm.

* During the 1980 and 1990s homeschooling took off. From 1990 to 1998 homeschooling grew from 300,000 to 1.5 million. That is an annual growth rate of nearly 20%. If it continued at that rate the 1.5% of the American children now homeschooled would grow to nearly 25% in the next 10 years, 50% in 20 years. A number that surely demands social interest and wins political support.

* As homeschooling grew in the past two decades, practitioners began forming associations primarily to exchange information and to confront state laws that limited their rights. By 1993 homeschooling was legal in all 50 states, There are now some 700 homeschooling associations in the United States. About 50 of these have a nation-wide constituency. Homeschooling is beginning to self-organize into a unified whole.

* As the network grows, organs are forming to make the whole system function for efficiently. Most of the services provided to homeschoolers, like Growing Without Schooling, or Home Education, are primarily publications creating the network, linking the cells together. Others like the Clonlara School Home-Based Education Center provide a by-mail service with curricula, tests,

and diplomas for homeschoolers. Still others are newsletters written and exchanged by homeschoolers themselves. A few like Home Schoolers Defense Organization help homeschoolers with legal and legislative matters. One or two have books, equipment and other material for loans to homeschoolers. Some like SKOLE and AEROGRAMME are publications condemning the authoritarian, monopolistic state school systems and supporting alternative educational systems.

*Closely associated with the home schooling movement are a broad variety of alternative schools which are moving in the direction of child-centered education. Jerry Mintz in his *Handbook of Alternative Education*, lists 2500 Montessori schools, 100 Waldorf schools, and 60 Quaker schools as well as the 700 homeschools programs.

* In additions to these there is a growing number of Folk schools patterned after the Folk Schools of Denmark, "schools-without walls," "Open Universities" and learning centers. They do not fall within the province of being substitutes for the K-12 governmental schools. It is this later group of learning facilities with which this paper is most interested.

Community Learning Centers

* In the last two or three years local homeschooling networks have started providing themselves with a new form of learning social institution. They don't yet even have a universal name. To start examining them I will call them "Cooperative Community Life-Long Learning Centers (CCL-LLCs)."

* These community centers are cooperatively owned and controlled by the member families they serve. They provide counseling, mentoring, supplies, facilities, workshops and classes. They serve everyone regardless of religion, age, sex, learning level, financial ability, or employment status. They use all aspects of the community for learning. Libraries, YMCAs, churches, museums, local businesses, farms, government offices, the streets, the parks, and nature itself are all part of the learning system.

* Community Learning Centers put an end to the end of school. Life-long homeschoolers do not graduate in the sense of ending their learning careers. They are not expelled from the learning and exercise facilities of the traditional school. They have learned to

continue to be participants in the learning facilities that are the community in which they live.

* As Gene Lehman put it in one of his Luno broadsheets,
"life long learning relies heavily on daily life activities, deep and varied interactions among people, contact with nature, and a popular culture which is abundant, diverse, profound, and cheaply accessible to all. Most importantly, a holistic approach to lifelong learning relies on developing some kind of face-to-face community of friends and neighbors who co-operate in order to share the essential burdens and delights of life."

* In 1998 Community Learning Centers became of governmental interest when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act dedicated $40 million to expand after-school programs. But this program was limited to school districts, and administered by U.S. Department of Education. Thus it was directed more at getting kids off the streets, and saving a decaying schooling system, than experimenting a new futuristic systems of learning. Reinstituted in a positive vein, which was not trying to fixing a failing system but to build a new one, this attention to community schooling might well expand the homeschooling innovation to be the base on which the new millennium learning system could form.

* CCL-LLCs may be one of the most seminal social innovations of the past decade. They may be the seed for a deep fundamental change in the education/learning system of the future. CCL-LLCs are to a large extent an outgrowth of the rapidly growing homeschooling movement. It is conceivable that a network of Community Life-Long Learning Centers could completely replace the state controlled schools. And they could be much more than that.

Civil Society and Learning

* The transition to a Cooperative Community Life-Long Learning System is not only a change in educational practices, it is also a transformation of the whole mind-set on the value of knowledge and the value of the person. It is a clear example of the transition from the Dominator Paradigm to the Gaian Paradigm.

* "Teaching," "educating," and"schooling" imply that society, or government, is acting on, controlling, indoctrinating and forming, blank unformed minds. It is an authoritarian, hierarchical, dominating system of control from the top down. It is inherent in

rule from above: the divine right of government. It is in harmony with the fading Dominator Paradigm that holds that the cosmos, and the Earth, are parts of the chain of being in which man is a semi god controlling the Earth from above, and all lesser forms including women, children, animals, plants and the Earth's natural resources are but resources for the use of man.

* Every single word in "Cooperative," "Community," "Life-Long," "Learning," and "System" carries an important and transforming connotation. "Learning" is not something a superior being does to a lesser person. Learning is an act of self-volition. It is a self-actuated process of creating skills, discovering knowledge, and satisfying one's own natural curiosity. It is built on, and it teaches, the inherent right and responsibility of every individual to set her or his own standards. It honors the diversity of evolution. It is in harmony with the new Gaian worldview that everything is interdependent with everything else. It respects the new understanding that each of us is part of Gaia and "belongs" to Gaia.

* "Belonging" in this sense is much more that merely "being a member of. "Belonging" is the scientific fact that we are all interdependent systems within systems, or holons within holons, if you wish to use the systems jargon. Each of us is a whole made up of smaller wholes and imbedded in larger wholes. Gaia and the Cosmos are among the larger wholes of which each individual is a smaller whole.

* "Belonging" implies not only being a whole within wholes, but that we belong to and are subject to the laws of nature. "Belonging" to Gaia means belonging to the Earth and to one another. Belonging is an ethical proto-value inherent in the New Science/Social paradigm. It says that each individual is an integral part and responsible for the health and well being of the family, the community, Gaia, Each person is responsible for each of the larger systems of which he or she is a part. Inherent in this scientific concept of belonging is much of the perennial wisdom of the sages who have recognized that humanity cannot continue to exist on Earth without laws of conduct which emphasize our responsibility to and for one another. Belonging implies tolerance, respect, reverence, honor, cooperation, care, and love.

A Learning Society

* This transition from "educating" to "learning" is being recognized by a wide variety of scholars. Management guru Peter Drucker in his "Post-Capitalist Society" writes of a society based on knowledge. One in which all society is an open life-long learning system in which every person can enter at any level at any time. From the other end of the spectrum peace scholar Elise Boulding reports that a common feature of the many "Imagine a World Without Weapons" workshop she has held with people of all walks of life and all ages, was the vision of a "localist society" in which communities are self-reliant and "Learning appears integrated into other community activities. ... everyone is a learner, and education is life long." This theme of the "Learning Community" is fully integrated with the growth of civil society and all other aspects of the emerging Gaian Cultures.

Conclusion

* The transition from"educating" to "learning" typifies the emergence of Gaian Cultures. The Gaian Paradigm challenges every aspect of our cultural norms. Economics, health, habitat, community, and even religion as well as education, are going through deep fundamental examination and transformation. The millennium ahead will be one of radical change. For the first time in over 2000 years the Dominator Paradigm, based on self-interest, survival of the fittest, competition, materialism and greed is being challenged by a new scientific/social Gaian Paradigm. It replaces the values of the Dominator Paradigm with values such a common interest, responsibility, cooperation, community, and reciprocity.

* New concepts of learning could be the keystone on which the new millennium will evolve.

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PSCS: A School Where Learning is Rooted in Joy, Supported by Growth, and Nurtured by Community...

by Robin Martin

What do poetry, horse-race handicapping, and role playing games have in common? They are all classes taught at Puget Sound Community School (PSCS). This naturally leads one to ponder: "What KIND of school teaches such subjects?" After two weeks of visiting PSCS as a sort of free lance learner and educational explorer, I've only just begun to piece together the answer to this question.

With a strong background in educational theory and a growing passion for innovative alternative schools, I decided the time had come to see firsthand how PSCS really worked. For the past year, I had explored the philosophies of this school via their web pages and then for the past several months, I had "listened in" on and participated in their online "Announcements" and "Dialogue" mailing lists. My curiosity was indeed piqued.

PSCS follows no particular model of governance, but has used the Sudbury Valley School model and other philosophies as inspiration for creating structures that allow students (along with staff & volunteers) a level of freedom, trust, and responsibility unheard of in most traditional or private schools.

PSCS was the brain child of Andrew (Andy) Smallman who wanted to offer middle and high school students in the Seattle area the sort of respectful and FUN environment given at The Little School, a successful, 30+-year-old independent elementary school where Andy had been teaching. Andy wanted to combine the emergent curriculum ideas of The Little School with the integrated and experience-based programs provided at The Evergreen State College where he had received his BA. So, with a group of students who had "grown out" of The Little School and with parents who were strongly committed to more holistic forms of learning, PSCS has unfolded over the past five years as a community where youth learn how to learn and enjoy life at the same time.

Rather than being completely "formless" in its academic structures (as some "free" schools are), PSCS is currently built around six core programs, which students are free to sign up for, as much or as little, as they choose. These programs include:

(1) Tutorial Programz—weekly classes offered by students, community volunteers with specific passions they want to share, or PSCS staff. Topics offered depend on the interests of both students and facilitators. Deb, the program coordinator, has her hands full at the beginning of each quarter as she balances student and volunteer schedules into a flexible and workable agenda with both consistency and diversity from term to term.

(2) Apprenticeship Program—where individual students work one day a week for an organization that allows them hands-on experience with working in a field they wish to explore, whether for a day, a year, or anything in between depending on the level of commitment that each are willing and ready to give.

(3) Field Trip Program—once a week, students venture out with Danika (the program coordinator for both apprenticeships & field trips) and others on fun community outings, from the depths of the forest to the paint ball playing grounds, from local museums to Ultimate Frisbee fields—all manners of places where mind, body, and spirit can be exercised with the gusto of life.

(4) Online Program—e-mail dialogues on a variety of given topics, which all Netizens around the world are welcome to join in on. (I joined the Online Kindness Dialogue during the spring, and was in awe of the quality and depth of feelings and experiences shared; it made me think twice of how I define my own humanity.)

5) Intergenerational Program—opportunities to participate with other community members, from the young to the elderly, to learn and grow through interactions with others that allow students to explore their ideas in the full social context of their community.

6) Community Service Program—other opportunities with local volunteer organizations to take part in building (sometimes literally) a more humane and environmentally healthy community for all.

(In addition, Andy is currently consulting students and other esteemed community members of the Seattle area about creating a seventh program around personal leadership. This program would be for students who are wishing to "push" themselves and their academic prowess to higher levels, as they define and refine the skills believed to be needed for personal success in the decades ahead.)

While I had read all about these programs on their web site (see www.pscs.org), the opportunity to visit the school for two full weeks added rich dimensions to my understanding of the school's essence. My visit not only gave faces to the names, it also gave life to the philosophies and individuality to the community. In many respects, I find it inadequate to describe in only words the joys that I felt on this first exploratory adventure into PSCS.

During my first day, I started by watching a group of 10-12 students in the park taking an Internal Energy class with a local volunteer who walked them slowly through movements and motions for noticing and balancing their physical energy fields. As Andy and I sat and casually watched and chatted from a short distance, the students wove in and out between a deep focus on their body movements along side the easy flowing voice of the instructor and a jovial playfulness between one another. They had a lightness and aura about them that shone with a brilliance and love of life that is hard to describe.

This feeling of what I might call love-within-learning resounded more deeply and became more pronounced as the days went on and I saw more clearly the diversity of individuals which added to the richness of the community.

The second class that I attended, and in which I took a slightly more active role, was about the Bill of Rights. Facilitated by Andy, this class was examining the U.S. Bill of Rights in the context of creating and evaluating a PSCS Student Bill of Rights. True to many other classes, the discussion that day unfolded not just from the subject matter of the class but from current issues in the broader school community, as well as from many other playful tangents that told much about the casual relationships between students and staff. It felt to me as if the HUMAN BEINGS in the class were more important than trying to stick to any given subject.

During this particular class period, students were voicing concerns of the school possibly adopting a new graduating policy for departing students. In contrast to many other classes that I was to attend, here Andy's voice was the one heard most often as he reflected on his views to questions posed by students. Clearly, it seemed to me that Andy was not viewed so much as an authority (in the traditional sense) by the students, but rather, he was treated as a respected leader who had given the issue a great deal more heart-felt reflection than most anyone else had. Students listened intently to his ideas, and weren't afraid to question when they wanted more clarification on his line of reasoning. He was clearly a leader, yet a leader that seemed somehow outside of the traditional student/teacher paradigm, or that was the feeling that I was beginning to get as the days went on. Was this style of leadership a skill that Andy had developed, a relationship that had consciously evolved, or some combination of both? And how would such leadership unfold, as it allowed for the transformation and empowerment of all persons within its reach? Such questions were but the tip of the iceberg of ideas that began to flow through my head in the days following my visit to PSCS.

The third class that I observed on that first day was horse race handicapping, in which Al Smallman, Andy's dad, volunteered to share with students his expertise on the finesse and nuances that go into reading the stats on horses and picking the winners. During this class, I watched as students playfully bantered back and forth about which horses had the best chances given a multitude of factors (experience of jockeys & trainers, past wins and racing patterns of horses, and much more). Not only were these students having fun with the art and science of logic, perhaps more importantly, they were learning to offer their supported opinions and disagree with one another without taking it personally. "You're full of it!" was said with smiling faces and taken equally as lightly. Yet, I couldn't help but wonder how would these students fare in the face of conflict closer to their hearts?

However, in the two weeks that I attended classes (or tutorials, as they call them), I never once saw a conflict that wasn't handled with the same playful grace and respect that I observed on my very first day. Were students being on their best behavior for me as a guest? One might argue that, though, by the last day of classes on June 11, I was feeling more like a part of the scenery than an actual "guest" (that is, they treated me as a casually accepted participant/observer in their midst). Another possibility is that students were altering their behaviors somewhat due to it being the last two weeks of school before summer break. According to Andy, students were indeed a bit more lax in class attendance and overall focus, and perhaps a bit more wired and playful as well. So, the time of the year did indeed change the dynamics of the school in some ways. Yet, Andy explained that conflicts never really unfolded in out-of-control, angry ways at PSCS. That's not to say that they don't disagree or argue in frequent occurrence by my estimate), nor am I implying that a person's feelings aren't occasionally injured. Rather, the norm at this school is that students don't fight or get really angry at each other. (What! What kind of reality are they creating at this school!!??) How could such skilled conflict-resolution tactics emerge so seamlessly from a group of untrained teenagers? Were these students even aware of the quality of the community they were building, of their uniqueness in a society where formal training (or therapy!) is often viewed as the means by which people learn such finesse and personal discipline? Yet, here these students are learning it naturally and effortlessly, as an unfolding part of themselves in a loving community.

Of course, it could certainly be argued that these students are just similar enough in their up-bringing and backgrounds as to not warrant much cause for intense personal conflict. While there is some truth behind this line of thought which may be worth further exploration, I must also add that these students were as diverse in their personalities as Marie Osmond and Madonna. Still, one must admit that the kinds of parents who allow their children to enroll in such a radical alternative have, in all likelihood, already developed high levels of trust with their children—which is indeed unique in our society, which may have much impact in how PSCS unfolds in its day-to-day interactions. Perhaps, as well, these families often have the financial flexibility to offer their children other advantages to learning & living that allow for more healthy personal development than is afforded many youth. This leads me only to ponder, how would scholarships for students from less economically stable families alter the dynamics of PSCS? Perhaps, as PSCS evolves and its reputation for thriving students gains esteem, such questions will be addressed through experience.

Another aspect of the PSCS culture that drew my attention during my exploratory visit was that there are no "teachers" at PSCS, only facilitators. Everyone in this community avoided the word "teach" like the plague, even when at times it was awkward to do so. More than just a cultural norm, though, this appeared to be a conscious effort of students and staff to focus their school on learning and learners. While class facilitators often had much to share with students, the students were equally responsible for making the classes into fun and effective places for their personal learning and growth. More than any other school or college that I've ever attended (and I've attended many!), these students consciously set the tone for their learning, with their relaxed postures, their playful observations, and their penetrating questions.

Finally, I can't offer an introduction to PSCS without also commenting on the incredible talent of the students. From writing to speaking to creating web pages, I've never seen such young minds with so much depth. These are the kinds of kids who could jump from high school to the working world with ease--if they so desired, as they write poems and deliver speeches and ideas the likes of which would take anyone's breath away. Yet, they do it with a joy and a humility that fills me with awe, as they constantly strive to better themselves and seek critiques of their work. Of course, I do not for one minute believe that these students are any more "gifted" as human beings than anyone else; rather, I believe, whether it be true or simply my over-active imagination, that there exists a greatness in us all. If we are allowed the freedom and provided the sort of nurturing environments where we might best blossom, we can all develop the skills that make our hearts sing and allow us to participate fully as members of our communities in the capacity that suits us best.

Rather than answering any of my questions about the essence of learning and how it unfolds within a more free and less structured alternative school, my visit to PSCS gave me a plethora of more questions and issues to address. More than just a radical kind of school, I found PSCS to be a loving community of youth, staff, and volunteers who care not only for themselves but for the community around them. Thus, it is with much energy and enthusiasm, that I propose to begin a more in-depth and qualitative study of PSCS in the coming year(s). I intend to volunteer as an active facilitator, to serve as a committee member as needed, and to write, Write, WRITE more about my observations of the transformative & empowering aspects that I see unfolding within this nurturing and inspiring community of learners. Whether others will be interested in reading my ideas as they expand through my participation with PSCS, I know not. I only know that if I wish to expand my own ideas about education as it COULD be, then I must begin by getting involved more, hands-on, with schools like PSCS.

*Here are chapters 4 & 5 of Elizabeth Byrne Ferm's masterpiece of 1949 which ΣKOΛE has been serializing for over a year! it is our belief that this book has received far too little attention in proportion to the depth of its wisdom and understanding of the lives of children! Since this is the last issue of ΣKOΛE, it is also the last serialized chapters of Mrs. Ferm's book as well. My plan at this point is to offer selected chapters on my planned new website Living and Learning, which will be developing steadily during 1999! If you're curious about its current form, visit us at www..*netheaven.com/~wleue/d2earth.html/

FREEDOM IN EDUCATION

by Elizabeth Byrne Ferm

Educator and longtime teacher at the Stelton School,
the American anarchist Modern School in Stelton, NJ

CHAPTER 4

License in Education

In the present struggle for greater freedom of opportunity for the child, there is no greater stumbling block to its realization than the championship it receives from those who hold abstract idealistic conceptions of life and freedom. Freedom they conceive as a spiral of ascending joy and peace, based upon an environment devoid of all that is harsh and ugly. They encircle the developing child with flowers and sculpture, pictures, music and literature, which are calculated to influence the child's life and mold his character.

The consternation of such well-meaning people, when they find the child repudiating their esthetically prescribed surrounding and creating in its stead an environment of his own, in which he is able to balance his life through struggle and peace, through pain and joy, reveals how unstable and limited their outlook on real life is. They refuse to accept growth which develops through turmoil and friction and pain. "This is license," they exclaim. "License is not freedom."

Fearfully they gather their strings about the child again—strings which they had never discarded, but only allowed to slacken in their grasp—and firmly and determinedly they draw the child back into their gilded cage, where they strive to allure the child into a make-believe life, a make-believe world and a make-believe freedom. A kindergartner answered my plea for greater freedom for the child by saying, "I tried freedom for one morning. That was enough for me."

As physical freedom simply means opportunuty for self-expression, and as life in its endeavor to express itself creates struggle and pain, it is folly to expect only joy, happiness and peace from a free condition or state. Joy is always balanced by pain. Freedom has its bitter and its sweet. In the primitive conception of life which the child holds, we find the child, when unrestrained, vigorously manifesting his desires.

In his aggressiveness, we find the natural crudity of every initial effort. When license rears its head in a free association, there is no need to sound an alarm against freedom. The cause of license lies in the limited conception of freedom which the child holds. License is the lowest rung in the ladder of freedom, but we must remember that it is an indispensable rung, which developing man must use in his ascent to fuller and nobler living. License indicates that desire is not balanced by a sense of values and proportion. License is freedom in the rough, disguised in an uncouth, unpolished form. In its essence, however, it is one and the same as the freedom which we all crave and endeavor to establish. Human association—in the free relation—will speedily remove the rough edges from the early manifestations of freedom.

The child's experience with other humans will, in the order of time, develop his sense of value. To restrict an expression because license is taken betrays a lack of human development—on the part of adults—which equals if it does not exceed that of the child, who conceived license as full and perfect freedom. Freedom has as many attributes and phases as any other quality in man's consciousness. It cannot be grasped and measured as a static fixed thing. It is always relative to man's state of consciousness and stage of development. It is so dynamic in its quality and force, it becomes elusive, as soon as the individual tries to organize or embody it. The individual strives to realize freedom in some fixed way, only to find that the way is the path of bondage. All forms of life—whether inorganic or organic—reveal the struggle to be free. But each expresses it differently, showing us that forms of freedom must be as manifold and as fluid as life itself. Man must free himself. And he must attain it through his own development and consciousness. As A.E. puts it, "Freedom is a virtue of the soul." The only aid, therefore, that adults can give the child in his struggle for freedom is to recognize it as a dynamic force in life, justified by its persistent, insistent and uncontrollable quality. There is no process for developing freedom; it is in itself a process of development. Free man evolves from youth; free youth from free childhood; free childhood from free infanthood; and free infanthood from free conditions. We may have ideas of freedom without experiencing any phase of freedom, but there can be no real consciousness or knowledge of the quality of freedom which does not come to us through our own experiences in life.

Our experiences are the result of our conceptions; our conceptions are the result of our impressions; our impressions are the result of our sensations; and our sensations are produced by actual contact with the life and things surrounding us. Such is the law and the order of development. An infant restricted from free physical movement must carry over into his next physical stage of develop ment, i.e., the child stage, the expressions which naturally belonged to his infant stage. The fettered expression of one stage of development must be carried over and worked out in another stage. Expressions of infancy in childhood are out of relation. When a thing is out of relation its proportions and true worth are lost. When an adult acts like a youth, when a youth acts like a child, when a child acts like an infant, the act becomes either silly or repulsive. When, however, an adult conjoins the simple directness of childhood with his mature physical and mental development, his life is rounded and full indeed; but when we find an adult with a consciousness belonging to childhood, we find a stunted, dwarfed development.

In the child's attempt to understand his own life he measures it against the life which surrounds him, by hindering, thwarting and intercepting the progress of the form of life which attracts his attention. If the child sees a fly he may try to catch it. If another child is running past him, he may try to stop the child by catching or tripping him. Such displays of power belong to a child's early development.

When we find grown-ups gauging their power by blocking the progress of others, we may be quite sure that they are exhibiting a state which belonged to an earlier period of development. Every form of exploitation and monopoly is rooted in the same crudity of thought, i.e., that the success of one is attained through another's defeat. The harsh expression of the child—with his limited power to inflict suffering—affects all thoughtful adults disagreeably. We are tempted to divert his interest or influence his act so that his victim may escape him; but when we see indifferent grown-ups inflated with a sense of personal power and greatness through hindering the life expression of animals and humans, we are repelled from such expressions as unworthy of adult life.

If such manifestations expressed true adult development we might despair indeed. But when we see it as the result of earlier influences—which prevented a normal expression—we realize that while we are powerless to undo the evil effect of the past, we can stop perpetuating the conditions which create and foster the evil. We cannot change grown-ups, but we can save the young by removing the bars which obstruct the natural expressions of humanity. Every life is "particular and unique in itself." Let us cease trying to shape and model it.

Every infant born into the world is the herald of the instinct, impulse and spirit of freedom. It manifests itself in every infant like a new-born effort in the life of humanity. The infant reveals no heredity of repression or restraint. He comes into the world with an unhampered, unharnessed spirit. He cannot be diverted from his need. No form of cajolery, argument or punishment can alter his set purpose. The infant is free from all the social weapons, i.e., shame and fear. Even physical suffering cannot subdue him. The more punishment you inflict, the louder he screams. The history of every conflict with infanthood spells defeat for the adult. The infant rules the household. Every adult—in the infant's kingdom, for that is what it resolves itself into—is a subject during the period of infancy. The infant is the dominant tone because he is the only free spirit in the home. The struggle between the free spirit of infanthood and the bond-spirit of adulthood must result in victory for the infant. There is no instinct shown in infancy of domination or control over adult life. The struggle is invited by the adults who supervise and care for the infant. Adults usually greet the infant's entrance upon life with rules and regulations which, when they attempt to impose them on the infant, create opposition. Out of the conflict we find the unconquerable spirit of the infant triumphant and free and the bond spirit of the adults who strove to conquer, vanquished and subjected.

Even on the threshold of child life we find the same impulse of freedom expressed. The child wants to do everything for himself. He wants to dress himself, go up and down stairs alone, get his own chair, etc. With his physical growth, however, he has also developed a discriminating sense which separates and divides the homogeneous and indivisible life of his infant state. The child with his new development of consciousness, is reaching out toward the external. Outside things attract him. He strives to attain them. He soon realizes, however, that the outer things are claimed and controlled by adults, who guard them.

The child desires to possess the thing which attracts his attention. He is impelled by his inner need, to test and prove the quality of the things which surround him. The child soon learns that the outer world is one of privilege and monopoly. The child must bargain and barter with adults if he is to gain his end. "If you are a good boy"—which usually means being negative and submissive—"you may have it." "If you promise mother not to annoy her," etc.

The child is soon caught in the net which will land him a long way from his former free state. The lure of things—which he sees spread before him—entices him on. He cannot retrace his steps, for he does not know by which path he came. Now adults become victorious and the child is vanquished. The inner life of the infant is subordinated to the other thing.

I often ask myself if this surrender is inevitable. Is it involved in the process of human development? Can we avoid the subjugation of the inner life to outer things? Are interfering adults necessary as infanthood merges into childhood? Can we imagine a spontaneous, self-active, self-developing human making progress, continuously, through all the different stages of his development? I believe that we can do more than imagine such a condition. We have it in our power to realize such a state if we are determined to strive for it.

The greatest understanding attainable by the individual is in knowing himself as a creative being. Man's contribution and value to society lies in how he has revealed his inner life in his external surroundings, and not by the influence he exerted on the lives of other humans.

CHAPTER 5
Who Wins?

I used to think that after the triumphant sovereignty of infancy the grown-up held the reins of power. After greater observation and experience I have come to the conclusion that the adult, when he engages in a conflict with the young, is never victorious—whether it is with infancy, childhood or youth.

Life would seem like a huge joke if youth were subject to age. Physically the struggle between them is like that of life with death. Mentally it is the conflict between the dynamic and the static. Spiritually it is the struggle between creative spirit and established form. The struggle is unending. It has always existed and will continue to exist. It is the disturbance involved in all change and growth.

Parent Groups and Teacher Groups meet in conclave with experts to direct and guide them. Dogmatic psychologists attempt to extend to these study groups the technique which will enable them to deal scientifically with the problem of the young. Formulas are passed on which never operate effectively. The singular personality of each individual, the special contribution of each child is unforeseen, unknown, and therefore cannot be calculated or measured.

These conferences remind me of the painting "The Ascension of the Virgin," which depicts how insensitive the churchmen were to the spiritual truths which they were supposed to protect. While they were disputing the question, the ascension of the Spirit took place. Angelic messengers flew around the churchmen, but they were oblivious to their presence. Far removed from the tomb stood a poet entranced by the vision of the spiritual ascension.

And so we perceive in our own day that patterns for life in these study groups are so precisely presented to the adults that they are overawed. The less they understand the meaning of the curriculum, the less doubt they entertain. They are diverted from finding out that the real problem is not the child, but the attitude of the adult towards the child.

A well-known psychologist, who never doubted the result of her analysis, whether the subject was young or old, one day, when on her "analytic" rounds, called on one of her student's mothers. The boy, a sturdy chap of five, insisted on staying right in the room where his mother entertained the visitor. The mother was embarrassed because she did not understand the boy's unusual attitude. Presently, the analyst pointed to the quiet, attentive boy and announced with authority, "Now, what that boy needs is to play," when as a matter of fact the mother knew that the boy was always playing. Very like the Churchmen and the Ascension.

When we try to fit the life expressions of the child for group study, we discover that life is absent and the subjects considered become unrelated acts and conduct removed from the state and time in which they happen. Life reveals itself through self-expression. The more you attempt to diagnose self-expression, the less you seem to understand it. If self-expression discloses nothing to you, then no amount of analysis will help. When adults recognize the value of the creative life to the young, they in some degree ally themselves with the young. Through that recognition youth and age are united. That recognition, however, does not entitle age to lead youth. It extends to age the privilege to follow behind, and if they have the capacity they may rejoice in youth's audacious adventures. Mishaps on the way, perhaps, but youth is not deterred by danger. Youth faces difficulty by contracting, expanding and bending itself before them.

I remember an incidence when I visited a friend who is the mother of four handsome girls. The youngest one had just come home from school. When I entered, mother and daughter looked flushed and disturbed. The girl, about ten years of age, was too engrossed with her own affairs to notice me. She held a little doll in her arms. She had evidently changed her frock, because the mother very positively told her that she should take it off. I tried to act as if I were not aware of any trouble. I endeavored to speak with my friend concerning the reason for my visit. The mother tried to interest herself but she was just as upset as her daughter. Finally she blurted out the story. Florence had been invited to a doll's party that afternoon. My friend did not approve. She maintained that when Florence came from school she required rest and quiet. My friend thought that the mother who was giving the party was very designing. Having an only child, she was glad to have an excuse to assemble other children so that her Elvira would be less exacting and irritable. Consequently, she was repeatedly making attractive proposals to get the neighborhood children to her home.

Florence was watching her mother very closely and, instinctively, I thought, her mother was clearing the way by talking it out. When Florence heard us discussing something alien to her needs or wants, she noisily threw herself on the couch and grunted. I decided I had better leave because the mother was too much affected by Florence's conduct. But suddenly the mother turned to Florence and said, "Well, you may go, but remember. you are to leave at five o'clock."

Florence grabbed her hat and coat, (she still wore the frock she had been told to change), took her dool from the couch and was about to dash out when her mother asked, "How will you know when it is five o'clock?"

Florence answered, "I don't know." After an awkward pause, Florence naively added, "I'll leave when it is dark," which would have been about seven p.m. My friend seemed relieved to have the struggle ended, but she did not look very triumphant. She eased her mind by blaming the neighbor.

It was interesting to me to see how she tried to save some vestige of authority by making the time stipulation. How cleverly the daughter took advantage of the concession and hurried up to be in time for the party! The loss to Florence was the time lost in the personal conflict. Well, if the party started without Florence, she would be there for the close anyway. What a true feeling for the value of time Florence showed! Time wasted at one end elastically stretched out at the other. The young are not hampered by abstract ideas of time. What they can do with it is their only concern. I appreciated the mother's plight, but my sympathy and interest were with the youngster. Why should the tired, jaded nerves of age prescribe rest and quiet for the young? In all my experience I have not met a self-active child who needed rest and quiet during the day. I have seen children irritated, excited, infuriated and exhausted from impotent rage when their self-expression, self-activity was frustrated. I have heard mothers, when they were embarrassed by such displays, interpret these exhibitions as need for a nap. We accept such explanations as excuses.

I recall the struggle of a three-year-old boy who had been invited to get his chair to eat supper with some friends in the dining room. He tried to haul and pull his chair from the kitchen, but with rugs and furniture in the way it was not an easy job. Besides, the kitchen and dining rooms were not adjoining rooms. The mother, amused at his effort, picked up the chair to carry it for him. The little fellow screamed and threw himself on the floor. When the mother tried to pacify him, he kicked her and would not allow her to approach him. It finally dawned on someone present that Eugene wanted to get the chair to the dining room himself. The chair was brought back and placed beside him. He was left alone. In a very short time Eugene was on his feet, and resumed the struggle of getting the chair to the dining room, which he succeeded in doing. The tear stains and dirt marks on his face were the only signs left of the struggle. The mother was the one who suffered. She was the one who needed the rest and quiet. Eugene, fiushed with the achievement, mounted his chair and ate his meal with his friends as if nothing had happened to disturb him.

The modern mother is torn between feelings and ideas. Feelings pull her one way, ideas steer her in another direction. The modern methods are dogmatic, and exacting on parent, teacher and child. The remedies recommended by psychologists do not always fit. A mother told me that she never found any of them a help, because her boy never acted in a manner for her to apply the remedy.

When young and old are unhampered in their relation with one another, they will act very much like Eugene with his chair. They will resume doing the thing from which they were sidetracked. The dreaded analyses, tests, suggestions and hindrances will be thrown into the discard along with other exploded cure-alls.

Two news items:

We received this from Caspar Davis
prana@coastnet.com

ON COMMUNITY COMPLIANCY
byKarlos deTreaux

[The following edited excerpts are taken from a nine-page special report by Karlos deTreaux, Kauai, Hawaii which was sent to all those on the NHNE [New heaven New Earth] mailing list a few weeks. This two-page abbreviated version is presented here because we feel the message is important and some people may not have had time to read the full report.]

Almost a year ago, I was exposed to the human equivalent of the Y2K virus. I was certain we were doomed. My response was to sell everything non-essential, buy gold, guns and ammo, dehydrated food, and head for the hills. Suddenly there were only two types of people in my life: those who understood Y2K, and what it meant; and those who were ambling along toward death and destruction. I had an advantage: I had information others did not and I was prepared to act on it at all costs.

Then something strange happened. I was in a hunting shop looking over bow and arrow setups—something that would still protect the family when the ammo ran out. It was obvious I did not have a clue what I needed. The shop owner wondered why I was interested. I explained to him what I "knew" about Y2K. I infected the poor fellow with the "Y2K virus." As I left the shop, he was jumping up and down in excited panic, "I'm gonna blow their damn heads off if they try to steal my food."

It was then that things changed for me. I had just infected this guy with not only fear and panic, but hopelessness; I had left him to fend for his own sanity. What the hell had I been doing for the past several months? I would never be able to turn away a hungry neighbor if things got bad. I would share my food, my provisions, my shelter with all who needed it. There was really no other option for me.

I realized that aside from the technological aspects of Y2K, there was the human factor. All the bug fixes in the world could not keep the money in the banking system if the public lost confidence in banks. According to my research, if as few as five percent of the saving public demanded their hard-earned savings from the banking system, the banks would be brought to their knees.

I devoured everything written by Larry Shook, Bill Dale, Cynthia Beal, Tom Atlee, Paloma O'Riley, Rick Cowles, Bill Laird, Robert Theobald and other visionaries.* They all seemed to be spelling out the specifics of a concept I have held in my heart for years, something that I have come to call "Community Compliancy." It was not the end of the world—it was an opportunity to make a massive leap as a planetary civilization. We all had created it and we all would have to fix it. This would involve clear and definite technological fixes, but even more important was the need for "Social Compliancy." It was going to be a difficult problem, but it was also the greatest opportunity that we the people of the Earth had ever had. The last veil of fear lifted from me.

My partner and I, along with [like-minded friends], established the COMMUNITY SELF RELIANCE COOPERATIVE (CSRC). We drafted a mission statement pledging that fear would not become our motivating impetus for action, and developed a Web site to disseminate educational information.

A critical mass was reached. The Mayor of Kauai [decided that the island] needed to address the issues. She called a meeting of Kauai officials and other business and industry participants. We were asked to participate as "citizen representatives." The meeting was a huge success. [By the end of the meeting], the Mayor, along with her invited guests all understood that the social aspects of Y2K could have as big an effect on the economy as the technical aspects. Her response was to instigate a Y2K task Force to address both technical and social issues, and prepare contingency plans where mitigation and/or remediation might not be completed.

Then the Mayor went on Public Television with some of us from the newly-created task force. She pledged to bring the island of Kauai into a state of "Community Compliancy" that would exist outside of the realm of technology. This would involve a broad, system-wide approach that would [include] community gardens, county-sponsored first aid classes, study of our food reserves and natural resources should we be cut off from the rest of the world, fuel reserves, water and sewage, and education. Most of the participants signed up to help the Mayor and CSRC construct a fast-track plan of Social Compliancy on Kauai. We have instigated an island-wide Y2K Awareness Day, and [started holding] meetings on every part of the island.

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* Copies of a book on Y2K edited by Judy Laddon, Tom Atlee and Larry Shook entitled *Awakening, the Upside of Y2K* is available from Down-to-Earth Books or from the Living and Learning website at netheaven.com/~wleue/d2earth.html for $10 ($14 in Canada) plus $3.00 shipping.

It will not matter if Y2K comes to be regarded as the biggest hoax in human history, the simple act of bringing our island into a state of "Community Compliancy" will build much-needed bridges. There is no wasted effort. There is no adversary. There is only the simple actions of a community remembering what it means to have neighbors.

Just as Kauai is an island in the Pacific, all counties, towns, cities, neighborhoods, states and countries of the world are also islands in a sea of denial if we do not see that our very existence depends on a true and honest admission of our absolute interdependency upon each other. If, because of a simple computer glitch, we realize that we must embrace that interdependency, then our sea of denial might become a doorway through which we, as world community, [are able to walk gracefully] into the next millennium.

Karlos deTreaux
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[Since his initial posting, Karlos deTreaux has been caught up in a dizzy whirl of meetings, speeches, conferences, and TV interviews. The following edited selections are taken a message dated November 25.]:

[I found myself] beginning to put too much faith and dependence on a "Government Rescue" and was unconsciously moving away from the "grassroots" method and mentality that will ultimately be our salvation as communities in the next millennium.

It is crucial that the community members approach the task of Y2K outreach, education and preparation as their own. The only way to get the message out on time and to effectively take the actions needed is [with] millions of individuals distributed across the planet working in concert—not [as] heroes who could be suddenly taken out of the equation -- but [as] thinking, feeling people operating as one powerful yet gentle force of change on the planet. (JG)

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From The New York Times
for *Tuesday, September 1, 1998:*

CHICAGO SCHOOLS TO REQUIRE COMMUNITY SERVICE FOR GRADUATION

by Dirk Johnson

CHICAGO -- To instill a sense of civic duty in teen-agers, the Chicago public school system has become the largest district in the nation to require students to perform community service to receive a high school diploma.

Starting with this year's sophomore class, Chicago students will need to spend at least 40 hours in public service, such as tutoring young people or helping the elderly, during their high school years.

As part of the requirement, students must submit what the board calls a "reflection" on their service—an essay, a video project, an oral report—according to the measure passed last week.

"We want students to learn the importance of community," said Bruce Marchiafava, a spokesman for the Chicago schools, the nation's third largest system, behind New York and Los Angeles. "They need to know that community is about giving, not just getting."

The notion of mandated community service has been rejected by Los Angeles school officials. While the idea has been raised in New York, J.D. LaRock, a spokesman for the New York City schools chancellor, Rudy Crew, said officials have no plan to consider such a requirement.

Critics of the public service requirement say it can lead to an administrative nightmare. Schools decide what constitutes public service, who is responsible for supervising the young people, and whether schools would be liable for harm done to the students, or by them.

Education officials here say some of those issues are still being studied, including volunteerism done for groups with political agendas.

"If you let students work for an anti-handgun group," Marchiafava said, "Do you also let them work for the NRA?"

referring to the National Rifle Association, which advocates for gun owners.

But Chicago school officials, who have gained nationwide attention in recent years for cracking down on misbehavior and imposing a more rigorous academic regimen, insist that those problems are not insurmountable.

The Chicago schools had been labeled as the worst in the nation a decade ago by William Bennett, who was the secretary of education under President Ronald Reagan.

Seeing a school district rife with corruption and having scandalously low student achievement scores, the Illinois state Legislature in 1995 turned over control of the Chicago schools to Mayor Richard Daley, who appointed one of his top aides, Paul Vallas, as the district's chief executive officer.

Vallas has earned praise and criticism for scrapping a tradition of passing students whose marks did not merit advancement, the so-called social promotion. Nearly one-fourth of Chicago eighth-graders were required to attend summer school this year. Vallas has said urban students, especially from poor families, were being shortchanged in a system that implicitly believed they were incapable of achieving at higher levels.

When Vallas began his tenure, about one-quarter of Chicago school children were reading at or above national average. That figure has increased to about 35 percent. The Chicago schools have an enrollment of about 430,000, with some 559 schools and a budget of $3.4 billion.

Before implementing the community service requirement, Chicago public school officials studied two Roman Catholic high schools here, St. Scholastica and Good Council, which require good works for graduation. Vallas, a Chicago native who attended the city's public schools, as well as Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic schools, has often called on the public education system to study the successes of its parochial school counterparts, and vice-versa.

The public service program will include "service learning coaches" in each high school who will receive an annual stipend of between $1,000 and $4,000 to coordinate and supervise the students.

Some school officials around the country, including some in New York, question the message of forcing students to volunteer. LaRock said the notion of mandating volunteerism seemed an oxymoron. But Chicago school officials stressed the importance of students coming to learn that everyone must contribute their time and talents, or that society will suffer.

The sorts of work being encouraged by school officials include tutoring, cleaning homeless shelters and assisting the disabled. "Doing things for senior citizens is always good," said Marchiafava. "Everybody is for senior citizens."

REVIEWS:

MAY YOU NEVER STOP DANCING—
A Professor's Letters to his Daughter
by John D. Lawry
St. Mary's Press
Christian Brothers Publication
Winona, MN
Qpb, $13.95

John Lawry is a professor of Educational Psycxhology at Marymount College, Tarrytown, NY, who believes in the revolutionary educational value of love in the classroom! Like most generalizations, the application of "love" as a scientifically verified tactic for motivating students is a tool so powerful that it could even be used as a sinister "Big Brother" educational technique—but in the wise, loving hands of John Lawry, love creates an atmosphere which fosters confidence, creativity and openness to learning. *ΣΚΟΛΕ* has published several articles by Professor Lawry in which he describes the growth of personal and group healing and its effect on students' lives and their capacity for education.

This volume, originally published by Sheed and Ward in 1988 but discontinued by them in 1997, has now been reissued as a new, slightly augmented edition in reponse to appeals from college students who had been nourished and supported by its wisdom and now wished to extend this blessing to a new generation of college students.

The book was originally written in the form of letters from John to his daughter, starting while Lily was still in high school but looking at going to college, and represents the kind of wise, humorous, upbeat fathering that both supports and frees their recipient! As published, the letters are classified by topic headings which make them more easily available for use by its readers. Headings like

- "College Life Is Great"
- From High School To College: Making The Transition
- Getting The "Right" Courses
- Remembering People's Names
- Teaching From the Heart
- Getting Along With Your Roommate
- Falling in Love with the Library

- The Magic of Writing
- Developing the Inner Self
- Term Papers—the "Curse" of College Students

The bounty never ends, and I am tempted to reproduce every topic here! Here's a sample of what John has to say on "Finding Your Own Voice":

> ...I just finished an amazing book that I think you should know about. It was written by Mary Belensky and several colleagues and is entitled *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of the Self, Voice, and Mind.* It's a kind of Piaget-like analysis of how young women develop cognitively in contrast to young men. It identifies seven ways of knowing, or stages of development, that young women seem to go through (or get stuck in). These begin with Silence (characterized by having no voice at all, being filled with self-denial, being completely dependent upon external authority, and frequently having a background of having been abused as children) and end with Constructed Knowledge, an integration of the inner voice (subjective knowledge) and the voice of reason, combined with separate and connected knowing (procedural knowledge). The result is a unique and authentic voice.
>
> One of the arguments of the book is that women in our society (and probably other people) have trouble finding their own voice. Language and power are frequently related, and because men have most of the power in our culture, women frequently have trouble cultivating their own voice. ...

Even though the subject under discussion is about what he himself has learned or is learning, Lawry is *sharing* his process with Lily, not just pontificating as one who is a source of expertise *per se*! One senses that she is free to disagree, should she need to! It is the fact that what he is passing on to her is can be assimilated so easily into food for thought which is a tribute to his influence! This book is as much about Lawry's comfort and pleasure in the parental role, especially in its teaching function, as it is about the actual topics being transmitted. This, I believe, is the secret of its continuing appeal.

How I wish my own parents had felt more comfortable with this kind of totally objective yet equally personal guidance from a wise source when I was an undergraduate! OR that I had given my own children this kind of support while they were trying to find their own voices in an untried environment! The dilemma of making one's way outside the reliable boundaries of one's home subsculture in which the familiar signals no longer work very well and in which one's previous experiences count for so very little as signposts in a strange land is awesomely perilous! Yet the wise guidance of one's parents is undoubtedly the foundation on which to build new understandings, new skills and learnings. Reading John's book reaffirms an awareness of the profundity of a family connection which can function as steady inner beam holding a beloved child to a "way" through the darkness in very much the way the beam of an airplane guidance system enables the incoming plane to find its proper destination without faltering or going astray!

It is the marriage of love and what Richard Prystowsky calls "Presence" (see his article starting on page 14) which informs this precious volume. I urge readers with potential (or actual) college-student-age children to buy a copy for their own young student or college candidate!

You may order this book from our new online reader service (Living and Learning, www.netheaven.com/!wleue/d2earth/) which is in place in a preliminary form and will be developing steadily throughout the next few months, offering families annotated reviews of books to live by, at below retail prices (plus shipping)! You may write me at MarySKOLE@aol.com for a list of the books so far available through this service (see ad on page . A catalogue will also be available soon. Please allow a week or two for delivery!

Meditation by Rene:

from the Inside.

Through time
I have learned
to listen to a
child like a
seed...
gently nurture
water with honesty
live with strength
support with
Reckless
abandonment
show trust
listen with your soul.
Through experience
I have realized
to do all of this...
from the inside
out.

Living with a
flower growing
from the
heart.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Humor and uplift section:

KIDS' COMMENTS ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE

(From the Internet)

Concerning Why Love Happens Between Two Particular People

"I think you're supposed to get shot with an arrow or something, but the rest of it isn't supposed to be so painful."

Manuel, age 8

"One of the people has freckles and so he finds somebody else who has freckles too."

Andrew, age 6

"No one is sure why it happens, but I heard it has something to do with how you smell ... That's why perfume and deodorant are so popular."

Mae, age 9

On What Falling In Love Is Like

"Like an avalanche where you have to run for your life."

John, age 9

"If falling in love is anything like learning how to spell, I don't want to do it. It takes too long."

Glenn, age 7

On The Role Of Beauty And Handsomeness In Love

"If you want to be loved by somebody who isn't already in your family, it doesn't hurt to be beautiful."

Anita C., age 8

"It isn't always just how you look. Look at me. I'm handsome lil anything and I haven't got anybody to marry me yet."

Brian, age 7

"Beauty is skin deep. But how rich you are can last a long time."

Christine, age 9

Reflections On The Nature Of Love

"Love is the most important thing in the world, but baseball is pretty good too."

Greg, age 8

How Do People In Love Typically Behave?

"Mooshy ... like puppy dogs ... except puppy dogs don't wag their tails nearly as much."

Arnold, age 10

"All of a sudden, the people get movie fever so they can sit together in the dark."

Sherm, age 8

Concerning Why Lovers Often Hold Hands

"They want to make sure their rings don't fall off because they paid good money for them."

Gavin, age 8

"They are just practicing for when they might have to walk down the aisle someday and do the holy matchimony thing."

John, age 9

Confidential Opinions About Love

"I'm in favor of love as long as it doesn't happen when 'Dinosaurs' is on television."

Jill, age 6

"Love is foolish ... but I still might try it sometime."

Floyd, age 9

"Yesterday I kissed a girl in a private place ... We were behind a tree."

Carey, age 7

"Love will find you, even if you are trying to hide from it. I been trying to hide from it since I was five, but the girls keep finding me."

Dave, age 8

"I'm not rushing into being in love. I'm finding fourth grade hard enough."

Regina, age 10

The Personal Qualities You Need To Have In Order To Be A Good Lover

"Sensitivity don't hurt."

Robbie, age 8

"One of you should know how to write a check. Because, even if you have tons of love, there is still going to be a lot of bills."

Ava, age 8

Some Surefire Ways To Make A Person Fall In Love With You

"Tell them that you own a whole bunch of candy stores."
Del, age 6

"Yell out that you love them at the top of your lungs ... and don't worry if their parents are right there."
Manuel, age 8

"Don't do things like have smelly, green sneakers. You might get attention, but attention ain't the same thing as love."
Alonzo, age 9

"One way is to take the girl out to eat. Make sure it's something she likes to eat. French fries usually works for me."
Bart, age 9

How Can You Tell If Two Adults Eating Dinner At A Restaurant Are In Love?

"Just see if the man picks up the check. That's how you can tell if he's in love."
Bobby, age 9

"Lovers will just be staring at each other and their food will get cold... Other people care more about the food."
Bart, age 9

"Romantic adults usually are all dressed up, so if they are just wearing jeans it might mean they used to go out or they just broke up."
Sarah, age 9

"See if the man has lipstick on his face."
Sandra, age 7

"It's love if they order one of those desserts that are on fire. They like to order those because it's just like how their hearts are - on fire."
Christine, age 9

Titles Of The Love Ballads You Can Sing To Your Beloved

"How Do I Love Thee When You're Always Picking Your Nose?"
Arnold, age 10

"You Are My Darling Even Though You Also Know My Sister."
Larry, age 8

"I Love Hamburgers, I Like You!'"
Eddie, age 6

"I Am in Love with You Most of the Time, but Don't Bother Me When I'm with My Friends."

Bob, age 9

"Hey, Baby, I Don't like Girls but I'm Willing to Forget You Are One!"

Will, age 7

What Most People Are Thinking When They Say "I Love You"

"The person is thinking: Yeah, I really do love him. But I hope he showers at least once a day."

Michelle, age 9

"Some lovers might be real nervous, so they are glad that they finally got it out and said it and now they can go eat."

Dick, age 7

How Was Kissing Invented?

"I know one reason that kissing was created. It makes you feel warm all over, and they didn't always have electric heat or fireplaces or even stoves in their houses."

Gina, age 8

How A Person Learns To Kiss

"You can have a big rehearsal with your Barbie and Ken dolls."

Julia, age 7

You learn it right on the spot when the gooshy feelings get the best of you."

Brian, age 7

"It might help to watch soap operas all day."

Carin, age 9

How To Make Love Endure

"Spend most of your time loving instead of going to work."

Dick, age 7

Don't forget your wife's name ... That will mess up the love."

Erin, age 8

"Be a good kisser. It might make your wife forget that you never take out the trash."

Dave, age 8

"Don't say you love somebody and then change your mind ... Love isn't like picking what movie you want to watch."

Natalie, age 9

How Does a Person Decide Who to Marry?

"You flip a nickel, and heads means you stay with him and tails means you try the next one."

Kally, age 9

"You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming."

Allan, age 10

"No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you got to find out later who you're stuck with."

Kirsten, age 10

Concerning the Proper Age to Get Married

"Twenty-three is the best age because you know the person FOREVER by then!"

Cam, age 10

"No age is good to get married at.... You got to be a fool to get married!"

Freddie, age 6

How Can a Stranger Tell if Two People are Married?

"Married people usually look happy to talk to other people."

Eddie, age 6

"You might have to guess based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids."

Derrick, age 8

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What Do You Think Your Mom and Dad Have in Common?

"Both don't want no more kids."
Lori, age 8

What Do Most People Do on a Date?

"Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough."

Lynnette, age 8

"On the first date, they just tell each other lies, and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date."

Martin, age 10

What the Children Would Do on a First Date That Was Turning Sour

"I'd run home and play dead. The next day I would call all the newspapers and make sure they wrote about me in all the dead columns."

Craig, age 9

When Is It Okay To Kiss Someone?

"When they're rich."

Pam, age 7

"It's never okay to kiss a boy. They always slobber all over you ... That's why I stopped doing it."

Tammy, age 10

"If it's your mother, you can kiss her anytime. But if it's a new person, you have to ask permission."

Roger, age 6

"The law says you have to be eighteen, so I wouldn't want to mess with that."

Curt, age 7

"The rule goes like this: If you kiss someone, then you should marry them and have kids with them.... It's the right thing to do."

Howard, age 8

The Great Debate: Is It Better to Be Single or Married?

"I don't know which is better, but I'll tell you one thing ...I'm never going to have sex with my wife. I don't want to be all grossed out!"

Theodore, age 8

"It's better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need somebody to clean up after them!"

Anita, age 9

"Single is better ... for the simple reason that I wouldn't want to change no diapers... Of course, if I did get married, I'd figure something out. I'd just phone my mother and have her come over for some coffee and diaper-changing."

Kirsten, age 10

What Advice Do You Have for a Young Couple About to Be Married?

"The first thing I'd say to them is: 'Listen up, youngins ... I got something to say to you. Why in the heck do you wanna get married, anyway?'"

Craig, age 9

What Promises Do a Man and a Woman Make When They Get Married?

"A man and a woman promise to go through sickness and illness and diseases together."

Marlon, age 10

How to Make a Marriage Work

"Tell your wife that she looks pretty even if she looks like a truck!"

Ricky, age 7

"If you want to last with your man, you should wear a lot of sexy clothes.... Especially underwear that is red and maybe has a few diamonds on it."

Lori, age 8

Getting Married for a Second Time

"Most men are brainless, so you might have to try more than one to find a live one."

Angie L., age 10

How Would the World Be Different if People Didn't Get Married?

There sure would be a lot of kids to explain, wouldn't there?"

Kelvin, age 8

"You can be sure of one thing - the boys would come chasing after us just the same as they do now!"

Roberta, age 7

"DEAR PASTOR" LETTERS:

Dear Pastor, I know God loves everybody but He never met my sister. Yours sincerely, Arnold. Age 8, Nashville

Dear Pastor, Please say in your sermon that Peter Peterson has been a good boy all week. I am Peter Peterson. Sincerely, Pete. Age 9, Phoenix

Dear Pastor, My father should be a minister. Every day he gives us a sermon about something. Robert, Page 11, Anderson

Dear Pastor, I'm sorry I can't leave more money in the plate, but my father didn't give me a raise in my allowance. Could you have a sermon about a raise in my allowance? Love, Patty. Age 10, New Haven

Dear Pastor, My mother is very religious. She goes to play bingo at church every week even if she has a cold. Yours truly, Annette. Age 9, Albany

Dear Pastor, I would like to go to heaven someday because I know my brother won't be there. Stephen. Age 8, Chicago

Dear Pastor, I think a lot more people would come to your church if you moved it to Disneyland. Loreen. Age 9. Tacoma

Dear Pastor, I hope to go to heaven some day but later than sooner. Love, Ellen, age 9. Athens

Dear Pastor, Please say a prayer for our Little League team. We need God's help, or a new pitcher. Thank you. Alexander. Age 10, Raleigh

Dear Pastor, My father says I should learn the Ten Commandments. But I don't think I want to because we have enough rules already in my house. Joshua. Age 10, South Pasadena

Dear Pastor, Are there any devils on earth? I think there may be one in my class. Carla. Age 10, Salina

Dear Pastor, How does God know the good people from the bad people? Do you tell Him or does He read about it in the newspapers? Sincerely, Marie. Age 9, Lewiston

Dear Pastor, I liked your sermon on Sunday. Especially when it was finished. Ralph, Age 11, Akron

GIFTS FOR THE TEACHER

On the last day of kindergarten, all the children brought presents for their teacher. The florist's son handed the teacher a gift. She shook it, held it up and said, "I bet I know what it is—,it's some flowers!" "That's right!" shouted the little boy.

Then the candy store owner's daughter handed the teacher a gift. She held it up, shook it and said. "I bet I know what it is—it's a box of candy!" "That's right!" shouted the little girl.

The next gift was from the liquor store owner's son. The teacher held it up and saw that it was leaking. She touched a drop with her finger and tasted it. "Is it wine?" she asked. "No," the boy answered.

The teacher touched another drop to her tongue. "Is it champagne?" she asked. "No," the boy answered.

Finally, the teacher said, "I give up. What is it?" The boy replied, "A puppy!"

I'VE LEARNED...

I've learned that my daddy can say a lot of words I can't. -- age 8

I've learned that if you spread the peas out on your plate it looks like you ate more. -- age 6

I've learned that just when I get my room the way I like it mom makes me clean it up. -- age 13

I've learned that you can be in love with four girls at the same time. -- age 9

I've learned that you can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk. -- age 7

I've learned that if you laugh and drink soda pop at the same time, it will come out your nose. -- age 7

I've learned that when mommy and daddy shout at each other it scares me. -- age 5

I've learned that when daddy kisses me in the mornings he smells like a piece of Jolly Rancher candy. -- age 10

I've learned that when I eat fish sticks, They help me swim faster because they're fish. -- age 7

I've learned that when I wave at people in the country they stop what they're doing and wave back. -- age 9

I've learned that when I grow up, I'm going to be an artist. It's in my blood. -- age 8

I've learned that you can't judge boys by the way they look. -- age 12

I've learned that if you want to cheer yourself up, you should try cheering someone else up. -- age 13

I've learned that you should never jump out of a second story window using a sheet for a parachute. -- age 10

I've learned that parents are very hard to live with. -- age 12

I've learned that sometimes the tooth fairy doesn't always come. Sometimes he's broke. -- age 8

I've learned that if you talk too long on the phone with a girl, your parents suspect something is going on. -- age 11

I've learned that girls sweat just as much as boys. -- age 11

I've learned that when wearing suspenders with one strap down, you need to be careful going to the bathroom. -- age 10

I've learned if you put a June bug down a girls dress, she goes crazy. -- age 6

I've learned that it always makes me feel good to see my parents holding hands. -- age 13

I've learned that you shouldn't confuse a black crayon with a Tootsie Roll. -- age 10

I've learned that I would like to be a horse and live on a ranch, if only cowboys didn't wear spurs. -- age 8

I've learned that I like my teacher because she cries when we sing "Silent Night". -- age 7

I've learned that sometimes I don't like to play ball with daddy because he gets mad when I drop the ball. -- age 10

I've learned that milk helps keep your bones from bending over. -- age 7

I've learned that the teacher always calls on me the time I don't know the answer. -- age 9

I've learned how to hold animals without killing them. -- age 5

I've learned that when you have three of your wild friends in the car the driver freaks. -- age 9

I've learned that gold fish don't like Jello. -- age 5

I've learned that you should say your prayers every night. -- age 9

I've learned that the older I get the less attention I get. -- age 6

I've learned that sometimes my mother laughs so hard that she snorts. -- age 7

And since this is my last issue, I'm going to put in all the corny, tear-jerking, sweet stories some of us (like me!) love and are too often too afraid of other people's scorn to spread around. Maybe e-mail is changing this fear a bit. Anyhow, these are all stories I received online—and loved:

This is a said to be a true story that occurred in 1994, told by Lloyd Glenn:

Throughout our lives we are blessed with spiritual experiences, some of which are very sacred and confidential, and others, although sacred, are meant to be shared.

Last summer my family had a spiritual experience that had a lasting and profound impact on us, one we feel must be shared. It's a message of love. It's a message of regaining perspective, and restoring proper balance and renewing priorities. In humility, I pray that I might, in relating this story, give you a gift my little son, Brian gave our family one summer day last year.

On July 22nd I was in route to Washington DC for a business trip. It was all so very ordinary, until we landed in Denver for a plane change. As I collected my belongings from the overhead bin, an announcement was made for Mr. Lloyd Glenn to see the United Customer Service Representative immediately. I thought nothing of it until I reached the door to leave the plane and I heard a gentleman asking every male if they were Mr. Glenn. At this point I knew something was wrong and my heart sank.

When I got off the plane a solemn-faced young man came toward me and said, "Mr. Glenn, there is an emergency at your home. I do not know what the emergency is, or who is involved, but I will take you to the phone so you can call the hospital."

My heart was now pounding, but the will to be calm took over. Woodenly, I followed this stranger to the distant telephone where I called the number he gave me for the Mission Hospital. My call was put through to the trauma center where I learned that my three-year-old son had been trapped underneath the automatic garage door for several minutes, and that when my wife had found him he was dead. CPR had been performed, by a neighbor who is a doctor, and the paramedics had continued the treatment as Brian was transported to the hospital. By the time of my call, Brian had revived and they believed he would live, but they did not know how much damage had been done to his brain, nor to his heart. They explained that the door had completely closed on his little sternum right over his heart. He had been severely crushed.

After speaking with the medical staff, my wife sounded worried but not hysterical, and I took comfort in her calmness. The return flight seemed to last forever, but finally I arrived at the hospital six hours after the garage door had come down. When I walked into the intensive care unit, nothing could have prepared me to see my little son lying so still on a great big bed with tubes and monitors everywhere.

He was on a respirator. I glanced at my wife who stood and tried to give me a reassuring smile. It all seemed like a terrible dream. I was filled in with the details and given a guarded prognosis. Brian was going to live, and the preliminary tests indicated that his heart was ok—two miracles, in and of themselves. But only time would tell if his brain received any damage.

Throughout the seemingly endless hours, my wife was calm. She felt that Brian would eventually be all right. I hung on to her words and faith like a lifeline. All that night and the next day Brian remained unconscious. It seemed like forever since I had left for my business trip the day before. Finally at two o'clock that afternoon, our son regained consciousness and sat up uttering the most beautiful words I have ever heard spoken, He said, "Daddy hold me," and he reached for me with his little arms. [TEAR BREAK...smile]

By the next day he was pronounced as having no neurological or physical deficits, and the story of his miraculous survival spread throughout the hospital. You cannot imagine our gratitude and joy. As we took Brian home we felt a unique reverence for the life and love of our Heavenly Father that comes to those who brush death so closely. In the days that followed there was a special spirit about our home.

Our two older children were much closer to their little brother. My wife and I were much closer to each other, and all of us were very close as a whole family. Life took on a less stressful pace.

Perspective seemed to be more focused, and balance much easier to gain and maintain. We felt deeply blessed. Our gratitude was truly profound. [The story is not over] (smile)

Almost a month later to the day of the accident, Brian awoke from his afternoon nap and said, "Sit down mommy. I have something to tell you." At this time in his life, Brian usually spoke in small phrases, so to say a large sentence surprised my wife. She sat down with him on his bed and he began his sacred and remarkable story.

"Do you remember when I got stuck under the garage door? Well it was so heavy and it hurt really bad. I called to you, but you couldn't hear me. I started to cry, but then it hurt too bad. And then the "birdies" came "The birdies?" my wife asked puzzled. "Yes," he replied. "The birdies" made a whooshing sound and flew into the garage.

"They took care of me." "They did?" "Yes", he said. One of "the birdies" came and got you. She came to tell you I got stuck under the door." A sweet reverent feeling filled the room. The spirit was so strong and yet lighter than air. My wife realized that a three-year-old had no concept of death and spirits, so he was referring to the beings who came to him from beyond as "birdies" because they were up in the air like birds that fly. "What did the birdies look like?" she asked.

Brian answered. "They were so beautiful. They were dressed in white, all white. Some of them had green and white. But some of them had on just white."

"Did they say anything?" "Yes" he answered. They told me the baby would be alright." "The baby?" my wife asked confused. And Brian answered: "The baby lying on the garage floor." He went on, "You came out and opened the garage door and ran to the baby. You told the baby to stay and not leave."

My wife nearly collapsed upon hearing this, for she had indeed gone and knelt beside Brian's body and seeing his crushed chest and unrecognizable features, knowing he was already dead, she looked up around her and whispered, "Don't leave us Brian, please stay if you can.

As she listened to Brian telling her the words she had spoken, she realized that the spirit had left his body and was looking down from above on this little lifeless form. "Then what happened?" she asked.

"We went on a trip." he said, "far, far away.." He grew agitated trying to say the things he didn't seem to have the words for. My wife tried to calm and comfort him, and let him know it would be okay. He struggled with wanting to tell something that obviously Was very important to him, but finding the words was difficult.

"We flew so fast up in the air." "They're so pretty Mommy." He added. "And there is lots and lots of "birdies". My wife was stunned. Into her mind the sweet comforting spirit enveloped her more soundly, but with an urgency she had never before known. Brian went on to tell her that "the birdies" had told him that he had to come back and tell everyone about the "birdies". He said they brought him back to the house and that a big fire truck, and an ambulance were there.

A man was bringing the baby out on a white bed and he tried to tell the man the baby would be okay, but the man couldn't hear him. He said, "birdies" told him he had to go with the ambulance, but they would be near him. He said, they were so pretty and so peaceful, and he didn't want to come back. And then the bright light came. He said that the light was so bright and so warm, and he loved the bright light so much.

Someone was in the bright light and put their arms around him, and told him, "I love you but you have to go back.You have to play baseball, and tell everyone about the birdies." Then the person in the bright light kissed him and waved bye-bye. Then whoosh, the big sound came and they went into the clouds."

The story went on for an hour. He taught us that "birdies" were always with us, but we don't see them because we look with our eyes and we don't hear them because we listen with our ears. But they are always there, you can only see them in here (he put his hand over his heart).

They whisper the things to help us to do what is right because they love us so much. Brian continued, stating, "I have a plan, Mommy. You have a plan. Daddy has a plan. Everyone has a plan. We must all live our plan and keep our promises. The birdies help us to do that cause they love us so much."

In the weeks that followed, he often came to us and told all, or part of it again and again. Always, the story remained the same. The details were never changed or out of order. A few times he added further bits of information and clarified the message he had already delivered. It never ceased to amaze us how he could tell such detail and speak beyond his ability when he spoke of his "birdies."

Everywhere he went, he told strangers about the "birdies". Surprisingly, no one ever looked at him strangely when he did this.

Rather, they always get a softened look on their face and smiled. Needless to say, we have not been the same ever since that day, and I pray we never will be.

Slow Down

Have you ever watched kids on a merry-go-round, or listened to rain slapping the ground?

Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight, or gazed at the sun into the fading night?

You better slow down, don't dance so fast,
time is short, the music won't last.

Do you run through each day on the fly,
when you ask "How are you?", do you hear the reply?

When the day is done, do you lie in your bed,
with the next hundred chores running through your head?

You better slow down, don't dance so fast
time is short, the music won't last.

Ever told your child, we'll do it tomorrow,
and in your haste, not seen his sorrow?

Ever lost touch, let a good friendship die,
'cause you never had time to call and say "hi".

You better slow down, don't dance so fast
time is short, the music won't last.

When you run so fast to get somewhere,

you miss half the fun of getting there,

When you worry and hurry through your day,
it is like an unopened gift thrown away.

Life is not a race, so take it slower,
hear the music before the song is over.

ALL GOOD THINGS

He was in the first third grade class I taught at Saint Mary's school in Morris, Minn. All 34 of my students were dear to me, but Mark Eklund was one in a million. Very neat in appearance, but had that happy-to-be-alive attitude that made even his occasional mischievousness delightful. Mark talked incessantly. I had to remind him again and again that talking without permission was not acceptable. What impressed me so much, though, was his sincere response every time I had to correct him for misbehaving - "Thank you for correcting me, Sister!"

I didn't know what to make of it at first, but before long I became accustomed to hearing it many times a day. One morning my patience was growing thin when Mark talked once too often, and then I made a novice-teacher's mistake. I looked at Mark and said, "If you say one more word, I am going to tape your mouth shut!"

It wasn't ten seconds later when Chuck blurted out, "Mark is talking again." I hadn't asked any of the students to help me watch Mark, but since I had stated the punishment in front of the class, I had to act on it.

I remember the scene as if it had occurred this morning. I walked to my desk, very deliberately opened by drawer and took out a roll of masking tape. Without saying a word, I proceeded to Mark's desk, tore off two pieces of tape and made a big X with them over his mouth. I then returned to the front of the room. As I glanced at Mark to see how he was doing, he winked at me. That did it!! I started laughing. The class cheered as I walked back to Mark's desk, removed the tape, and shrugged my shoulders. His first words were, "Thank you for correcting me, Sister."

At the end of the year, I was asked to teach junior-high math. The years flew by, and before I knew it Mark was in my classroom again. He was more handsome than ever and just as polite. Since he had to listen carefully to my instruction in the "new math," he did not talk as much in ninth grade as he had in third. One Friday, things just didn't feel right. We had worked hard on a new concept all week, and I sensed that the students were frowning, frustrated with themselves—and edgy with one another. I had to stop this crankiness before it got out of hand. So I asked them to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name. Then I told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down. It took the remainder of the class period to finish their assignment, and as the students left the room, each one handed me the papers. Charlie smiled. Mark said, "Thank you for teaching me, Sister. Have a good weekend."

That Saturday, I wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and I listed what everyone else had said about that individual. On Monday I gave each student his or her list. Before long, the entire class was smiling. "Really?" I heard whispered. "I never knew that meant anything to anyone!" "I didn't know others liked me so much."

No one ever mentioned those papers in class again. I never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn't matter. The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another again. That group of students moved on.

Several years later, after I returned from vacation, my parents met me at the airport. As we were driving home, Mother asked me the usual questions about the trip—the weather, my experiences in general. There was a lull in the conversation. Mother gave Dad a sideways glance and simply says, "Dad?" My father cleared his throat as he usually did before something important.

"The Eklunds called last night," he began. "Really?" I said. "I haven't heard from them in years. I wonder how Mark is." Dad responded quietly. "Mark was killed in Vietnam," he said. "The funeral is tomorrow, and his parents would like it if you could attend."

To this day I can still point to the exact spot on I-494 where Dad told me about Mark. I had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. Mark looked so handsome, so mature. All I could think at that moment was, Mark I would give all the masking tape in the world if only you would talk to me. The church was packed with Mark's friends. Chuck's sister sang "The

Battle Hymn of the Republic." Why did it have to rain on the day of the funeral?

It was difficult enough at the graveside. The pastor said the usual prayers, and the bugler played taps. One by one those who loved Mark took a last walk by the coffin and sprinkled it with holy water. I was the last one to bless the coffin. As I stood there, one of the soldiers who acted as pallbearer came up to me. "Were you Mark's math teacher?" he asked. I nodded as I continued to stare at the coffin. "Mark talked about you a lot," he said.

After the funeral, most of Mark's former classmates headed to Chuck's farmhouse for lunch. Mark's mother and father were there, obviously waiting for me. "We want to show you something," his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket. "They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it." Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times.

I knew without looking that the papers were the ones on which I had listed all the good things each of Mark's classmates had said about him. "Thank you so much for doing that," Mark's mother said. "As you can see, Mark treasured it." Mark's classmates started to gather around us. Charlie smiled rather sheepishly and said, "I still have my list. It's in the top drawer of my desk at home." Chuck's wife said, "Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album." "I have mine too," Marilyn said. "It's in my diary." Then Vicki, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. "I carry this with me at all times," Vicki said without batting an eyelash. "I think we all saved our lists." That's when I finally sat down and cried. I cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again.

THE END

Written by Sister Helen P. Mrosla

Instructions for Life

1. Give people more than they expect and do it cheerfully.
2. Memorize your favorite poem.
3. Don't believe all you hear, spend all you have or sleep all you want.
4. When you say, "I love you", mean it.
5. When you say "I'm sorry", look the person in the eye.
6. Be engaged at least six months before you get married.
7. Believe in love at first sight.
8. Never laugh at anyone's dreams.
9. Love deeply and passionately. You might get hurt but it's the only way to live life completely.
10. In disagreements, fight fairly. No name calling.
11. Don't judge people by their relatives.
12. Talk slow but think quick.
13. When someone asks you a question you don't want to answer, smile and ask, "Why do you want to know?"
14. Remember that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
15. Call your mom.
16. Say "bless you" when you hear someone sneeze.
17. When you lose, don't lose the lesson.
18. Remember the three R's: Respect for self; Respect for others; Responsibility for all your actions.
19. Don't let a little dispute injure a great friendship.
20. When you realize you've made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.
21. Smile when picking up the phone. The caller will hear it in your voice.
22. Marry a man/woman you love to talk to. As you get older, his/her conversational skills will be as important as any other.
23. Spend some time alone.
24. Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.
25. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
26. Read more books and watch less TV.
27. Live a good, honorable life. Then when you get older and think back, you'll enjoy it a second time.
28. Trust in God but lock your car.
29. A loving atmosphere in your home is so important. Do all you can to create a tranquil harmonious home.

30. In disagreements with loved ones, deal with the current situation. Don't bring up the past.
31. Read between the lines.
32. Share your knowledge. It's a way to achieve immortality.
33. Be gentle to the earth.
34. Pray. There's immeasurable power in it.
35. Never interrupt when you are being flattered.
36. Mind your own business.
37. Don't trust a man/woman who doesn't close his/her eyes when you kiss them.
38. Once a year, go someplace you've never been before.
39. If you make a lot of money, put it to use helping others while you are living. That is wealth's greatest satisfaction.
40. Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a stroke of luck. (God's plan).
41. Learn the rules then break some (HA! HA!)
42. Remember that the best relationship is one where your love for each other is greater than your need for each other.
43. Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.
44. Remember that your character is your destiny.
45. Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon.

"Never Surrender...The Best Is Yet To Come"

KEEP ON SINGING

Like any good mother, when Karen found out that another baby was on the way, she did what she could to help her 3-year-old son, Michael, prepare for a new sibling. They find out that the new baby is going to be a girl, and day after day, night after night, Michael sings to his sister in Mommy's tummy. The pregnancy progresses normally for Karen, an active member of the Panther Creek United Methodist Church in Morristown, Tennessee. Then the labor pains come. Every five minutes ... every minute.

But complications arise during delivery. Hours of labor. Would a C-section be required? Finally, Michael's little sister is born. But she is in erious condition. With siren howling in the night, the ambulance rushes the infant to the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Mary's Hospital, Knoxville, Tennessee.

The days inch by. The little girl gets worse. The pediatric specialist tells the parents, "There is very little hope. Be prepared for the worst."

Karen and her husband contact a local cemetery about a burial plot. They have fixed up a special room in their home for the new baby... now they plan a funeral. Michael, keeps begging his parents to let him see his sister, "I want to sing to her," he says.

Week two in intensive care. It looks as if a funeral will come before the week is over. Michael keeps nagging about singing to his sister, but kids are never allowed in Intensive Care. But Karen makes up her mind. She will take Michael whether they like it or not. If he doesn't see his sister now, he may never see her alive.

She dresses him in an oversized scrub suit and marches him into ICU. He looks like a walking laundry basket, but the head nurse recognizes him as a child and bellows, "Get that kid out of here now! No children The mother rises up strong in Karen, and the usually mild-mannered lady glares steel-eyed into the head nurse's face, her lips a firm line.

"He is not leaving until he sings to his sister!" Karen tows Michael to his sister's bedside. He gazes at the tiny infant losing the battle to live. And he begins to sing. In the pure hearted voice of a 3-year-old, Michael sings: "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are gray ---

Instantly the baby girl responds. The pulse rate becomes calm and steady. Keep on singing, Michael. "You never know, dear, how much I love you, Please don't take my Sunshine away"

The ragged, strained breathing becomes as smooth as a kitten's purr. Keep on singing, Michael. "The other night, dear, as I lay sleeping, I dreamed I held you in my arms..." Michael's little sister relaxes as rest, healing rest, seems to sweep over her. Keep on singing, Michael.

Tears conquer the face of the bossy head nurse. Karen glows. "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. Please don't, take my sunshine away."

Funeral plans are scrapped. The next day—the very next day—the little girl is well enough to go home! *Woman's Day magazine* called it "the miracle of a brother's song." Karen called it a miracle of God's love!

NEVER GIVE UP ON THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE!!!
Send this to all the people that have touched your life.

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